LIVE THE LIFE...LOVE THE STYLE

COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

NOVEMBER 2015



NEW LOOK! See inside

Dark & handsome

LOVE THE DEEP, RICH COLOURS OF THE SEASON

There's no place like home!

A FORAGER'S FEAST

Big-on-flavour recipes from the woodland larder

COUNTRY STYLE

Now & forever

Pared-back kitchens

Sofas to curl up on

Walls with character

Warm hearted!

Relaxed houses with roaring fires

Autumn is calling...

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*** Fallen-leaf garlands * The perfect pub**

*** Mindful mini-breaks**

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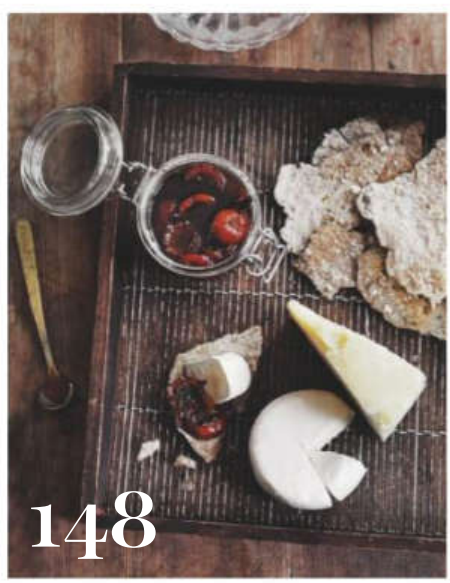
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Things I've seen, done and loved this month...

Autumn is calling! As the clocks turn back to give us shorter days and longer nights, the Country Homes & Interiors team has been getting in the mood for the pleasures of home and hearth. Inspired by the rich shades of nature's colour palette, we've been seduced by all things 'Dark and handsome'. Turn to page 74 for deeply cosy decorating ideas using the latest bramble, bark and midnight colours. The roaring flames of log burners and open fires connect us to a contentment that's both practical and emotional right now. Take a look at all the cottages, conversions and houses featured in this issue and you'll discover that fireplaces are at the heart of every single one of them. Pull up a chair and enjoy them from page 24. Finally, Halloween and Guy Fawkes are the 'must-do-something' dates in our country diaries, so make a leaf lantern (page 96), host a get-together (page 86) and enjoy the spirit of the night!

Rhoda x

PS: Have you heard about furnitureetc.co.uk? It's a new online marketplace for preloved and vintage furniture where you can hunt without the hassle and get your dreamed-of pieces delivered to your door. Take a look!

PHOTOGRAPH (BACKGROUND) A ROOM WITH VIEWS/ALAMY

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Things we can't live without NOVEMBER



Eating outside in the crisp autumn air. Folding **table** and **chairs,** similar from The Vintage Gardener. **Blankets** and **cushions,** similar from Bronte By Moon. **Hampers,** similar from Dibor. **Flask,** similar from John Lewis.



1 Pretty storage for tea-time treats. Vintage Apple cake tins, H7x19cm diameter (largest), £12.95 for 3, Dotcomgiftshop.
2 Enamelware in red-hot red for the Bonfire Night party. Enamel Falcon teapot, 1L, H16xW20cm, £18.95, Howkapow.
3 Tactile rattan furniture in a conker-brown hue. Butler's tray, H72xW65xD44cm, £120, Dupère Design.



Wearing colourful leaf prints to brighten up the day. Woodland **top,** £40; **skirt,** £45; Twisted Knit **cardigan,** £75, all Cath Kidston. Hat, model's own.

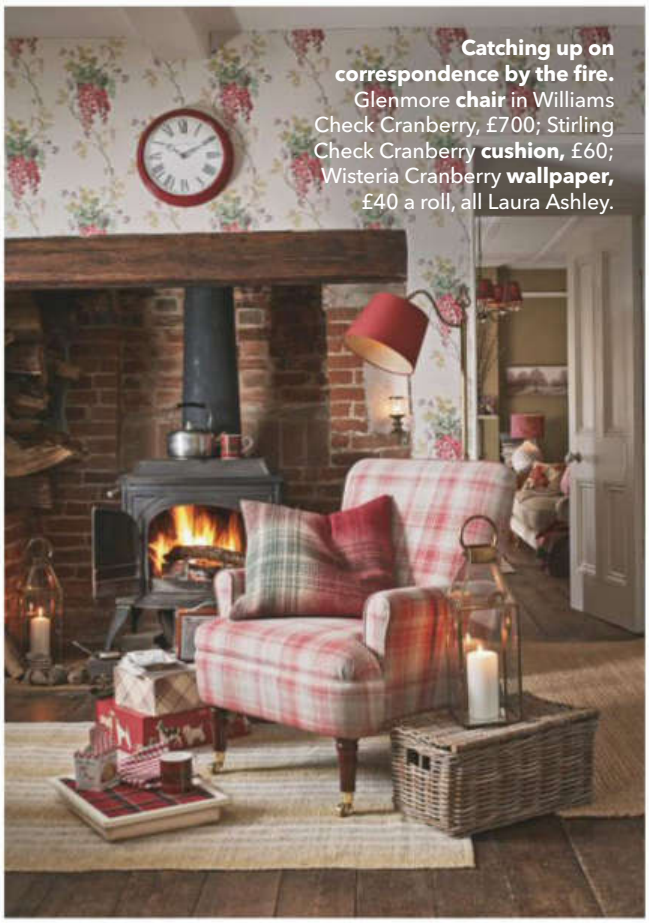


Layering mix-and-match fabrics in rich, earthy tones. Fabrics (from left), Harvest, Berry, Harlequin, Thistle, Gold, all £55.50 m, Linwood.

PINTEREST
For more things we can't live without, **follow us at countryhomesmag**



4 The warming glow of a lamp on a chilly evening. Heaney lamp, H37cm, £325; Lacock shade, 30cm diameter, £115, Fermoie.
5 Colourful game birds on a cosy cushion. Grouse cushion, H46xW61cm, £12, Very. **6 A rustic chopping board.** Gray & Willow board, 41cm diameter, £45, House of Fraser. **7 Seasonally inspired hanging hooks.** Leaf hooks, H20cm, £4 each, National Trust Shop. »



Catching up on correspondence by the fire. Glenmore **chair** in Williams Check Cranberry, £700; Stirling Check Cranberry **cushion,** £60; Wisteria Cranberry **wallpaper,** £40 a roll, all Laura Ashley.



8 Decorative accessories in gleaming metallics. Brenton lantern in copper, H18.7cm, £21, Broste at The Scandinavian Shop. **9 Woodland motifs decorating hidden treasure.** Ceramic trinket box, H14xW21xD21cm, £10, George Home. **10 A full-to-the-brim log basket to keep the fire aglow.** Leather log basket, H27xW57xD42cm, £185, Life of Riley.



11 Wrapping up in style with a sheepskin bodywarmer. Toscana asymmetric zip gilet, £395, Celtic & Co. **12 Syrupy sips of coffee for full-of-beans energy.** Brown espresso cup, H7cm, £14.50, Ohh Deer. **13 Making toffee apples.** Copper colander, H13.5x28cm diameter, £14.99, MiaFleur. **14 Soft cushions to cuddle.** Shetland windowpane cushion, 40cm sq, col Grape, £49.95, Bronte by Moon.



A frothy coffee served with a spicy cinnamon stick. Dachshund bone china **mugs,** £14 each, Emily Bond.

Colour of THE MOMENT

TAKE INSPIRATION FROM ROSY CHEEKS, FALLEN LEAVES AND JUST-RIPE APPLES WITH A SEASONAL PALETTE OF WARMING REDS IN CRIMSON AND CRANBERRY HUES.



(Background) Tapestry Floral Diamond Weave lambswool **throw,** £85, National Trust Shop. Archives I **wallpaper,** £49 a roll, University of Oxford at The Paper Partnership. Knightsbridge **carpet,** £80 sq m, Brintons. Rattan **tray,** £19, Jak Jak; Red Squirrel greetings **card,** £2.50, Cherith Harrison, both Not on the High Street. Copper hanging **frame,** £25 for 3, Cox & Cox. Enamel **mug,** £6, Baker & Bell. **Ribbon,** 90p a roll, Jane Means. **Fabrics** (in tray, clockwise from top left), Acorn and Leaf, col Cranberry, £46 m, Vanessa Arbuthnott. Larne Check, col Red, £62 m, Colefax and Fowler. Pixley, col Rhubarb, £68 m, Cloth & Clover. Lytham Ruby, £46 m, Villa Nova. Red Ticking, £26 m, Susie Watson Designs. **Paints** (on leaves, from top), Firecracker Lt, £19 for 1L, Sanderson. Crimson, £41 for 2.5L, Zoffany. Giffords Rouge, £15 for 1L, Water Lane Workshops. Bengal Red, £19 for 1L, Sanderson.

FEATURE HOLLY PHILLIPS **PHOTOGRAPHS** (MAIN) SUSSIE BELL; (MOODBOARD) TIM YOUNG

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Home notes

We want this now...



Inspired by the work of artisan craftspeople seen on her travels, designer Sophie Conran's latest collection includes this rustic jug, £18. Decorated with a simple folk-style design, it's made from natural river clay and painted by hand, then baked in the kiln to make it heatproof and dishwasher safe. Perfect for your table.

OUR FAVOURITE DESIGNER MAKER

Angie Lewin



As well as creating her own stunning designs, such as Meadow's Edge (cushion cover, £38, right), Angie works with other artists to produce fabrics and wallpapers for her online gallery, St Jude's.

Describe your design process. I draw nearly every day, either in my studio or out on walks. I'll make quick sketches, take photos or collect things as memories. A motif or an element within these will spark an idea and prompt me to create one of my repeating designs.
What inspires you? Spending time outdoors, whether in the wilds of northern Scotland or on the North Norfolk coast. I like to depict the native plants I find. I also pay attention to unassuming specimens by a trackside or on inner-city waste ground.
How do you hope to inspire others? I encourage my students to explore the possibilities of printmaking. I want them to find a method of working and a subject matter they can make their own. I hope my own work motivates others to see the diversity in our native wildlife.
What's your favourite design and why? It always seems to be the latest one! Birch Tree Sun (swatch, £54 m, above right) is based on an original wood engraving that I created back in 2006. The motif is evocative of the Scottish landscape where I spend most of my time, with the slender elegance of the striated trunks standing out against the late afternoon sun on the moors above the River Spey. It's a beautiful scene that has recurred in my sketchbooks and prints many times over the years.
Describe your creative style in three words. Graphic, natural and lined.
Visit stjudesfabrics.co.uk, 01603 662951. See more work by Angie at angielewin.co.uk.





Wallpaper, Hornbeam BP5005, £95 a roll, Farrow & Ball.

Pick country-style papers

As a tribute to its rural beginnings in a Dorset factory in 1946, Farrow & Ball has launched a new wallpaper collection featuring trees, grasses and blossoms. The three distinctive designs, in seven colourways, convey a peaceful country feel and are made using traditional block-printing methods. Each one has a textured finish that adds to its rustic appeal. Hornbeam (shown) features bold cloud-pruned hedgerows, a style made popular by top garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith, while gentle Blostma is reminiscent of floating petals. A large-scale border, Feather Grass is over a metre in height, with its hazy outline evoking rolling meadows.



STEP IT UP

This sturdy Stratton stool, £230 from Neptune, blends rustic wood with a white-painted finish for a modern take on traditional country charm. A kick-step pulls out to provide easy access to high shelving – a chic and functional addition to kitchens and pantries.

FEATURE TARA KING

Garden notes

AUTUMN PUNCH



With its exotic, curling candy-floss pink petals, *Nerine bowdenii* is no shrinking violet! Planted in well-drained soil in a hot, dry spot against a south-facing stone wall, it will spread quickly to form a flamboyant autumn show. £9.99 for 5 bulbs (for despatch by end of January 2016), from Thompson & Morgan.

OUR FAVOURITE GARDEN DESIGNER

Diarmuid Gavin

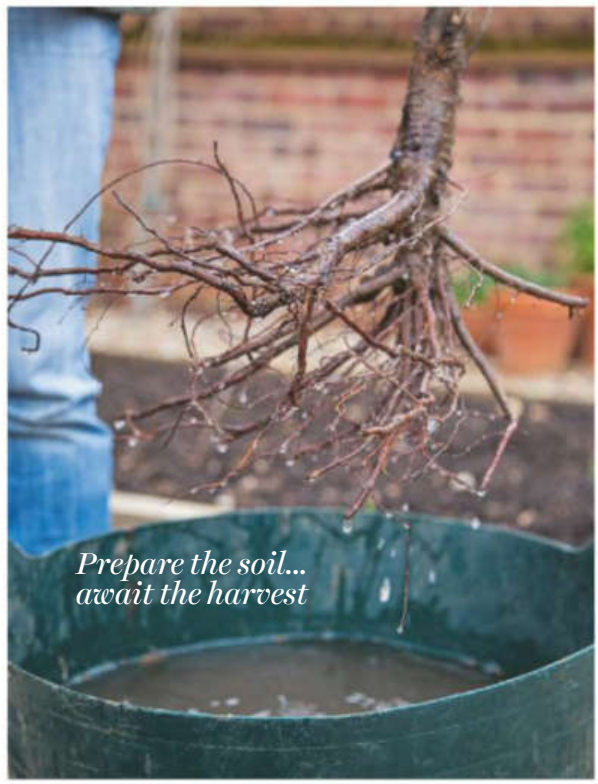
The garden designer and television presenter Diarmuid Gavin lives in Kilmacanogue, County Wicklow. He's best known for his exuberant, inventive designs.



What do you love about November? The autumnal clean-up. It's when gardens shed the year's growth to prepare for their seasonal sleep. It's also a time of consideration: you're starting to review what worked and went well this year, and to make plans for next. I've been putting together some 'how-to' guides with Wickes: how to make a fire pit and a raised bed, all things worth thinking about for the coming months, ready for spring.
What are you up to in your garden right now? I'm prepping my soil for new beds, introducing a lot of organic matter. I'm also looking to build a summer house from a pile of stones I've had lying in a heap for too long now. It's a good time to plant tulip bulbs, too – planting in November decreases the risk of the fungal disease tulip fire.
Do you have a 'can't live without' clean-up tool? A spring-tine rake is invaluable for clearing leaves from awkward places. You don't want your lawn struggling to breathe under leaves.
What are your favourite late-autumn plants? Grasses such as *Stipa gigantea* (above), *Molinia* and *Chionochloa rubra* look wonderful in autumn sunshine. A lot of deciduous trees have lost their foliage by now, so it's time to appreciate the beautiful bark of white birches and *Acer griseum*.
What plans do you have for the year ahead? I'll be back at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show – so I'm looking forward to that.



I'll also be unveiling a new quirky design in the New Year. Watch this space!



Prepare the soil... await the harvest

Plant a bare-root fruit tree

Grab a bargain in the form of a bare-root tree: apples, pears and medlars are all good choices for our climate. Plant the tree straightaway (if roots look dry, soak in a bucket of cold water for a few minutes) in a sunny, sheltered spot in well-drained soil. Dig in manure or compost then plant in a hole at least one-third wider than the roots, placing a stake in beforehand. Spread out the roots in the hole, then backfill up to the soil mark on the trunk. Use a tree tie to fix it to the stake, then water well for the following year. When choosing, look for the letters AGM (Award of Garden Merit) and ask about pollination and eventual size of the tree.



We want these now...

Professionals use these secateurs for good reason – they're sharp, ergonomic and comfortable. Treat yourself to a pair if you have a lot of pruning to do this month. Felco No7 secateurs (or No10 if you're left-handed), £49.99, World of Felco.

FEATURE FRANCESCA CLARKE **PHOTOGRAPHS** (NERINE) GAP PHOTOS/NICOLA STOCKEN; (GRASSES) GAP PHOTOS/HOWARD RICE; (FRUIT TREE) GAP PHOTOS; (PORTRAIT) LUKE FREEMAN

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Food notes

We want this now...



As we head into autumn with its longer, darker evenings, dishes such as macaroni cheese and vegetable gratin are on the menu. That's a lot of cheese to grate, but this new design from Alessi will make quick work of it. Beautifully styled in cherrywood with a steel grater and a neat cheese cellar, it costs £55 and is by Italian designer Kuno Prey. It has a real country feel and is a classic heirloom piece that you can keep in the family.

OUR FAVOURITE SLOE GIN PRODUCER

Julia Medforth

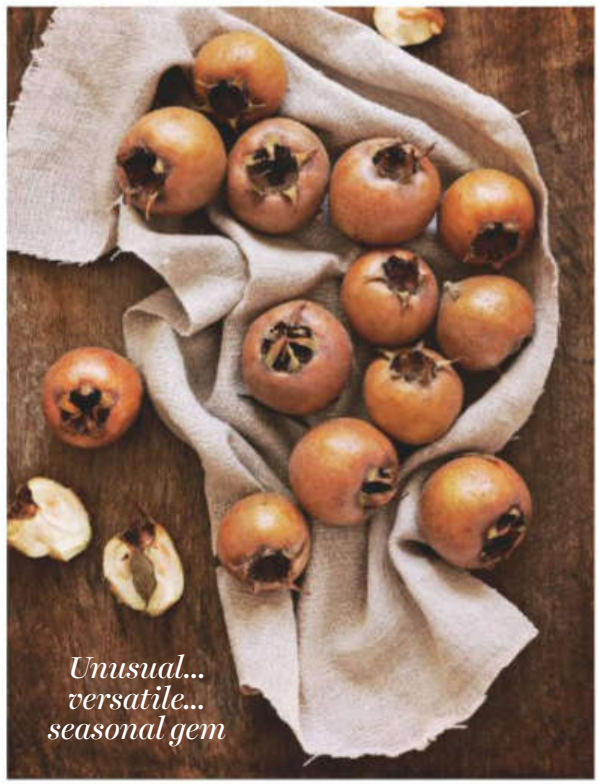
Yorkshire-based Julia produces Raisthorpe Manor's award-winning range of traditional country drinks.



Tell us how the business started... We have a shooting lodge on our estate and started offering guests a tipple. The drinks were so popular we decided to go into business from our farmhouse kitchen.
What's so special about your sloe gin? We are situated in the heart of the Yorkshire Wolds and the ingredients for all our drinks are sourced locally. Our sloe gin is produced from a family recipe using sloes steeped in London gin and sugar, then left for six to eight months to mature.
Have you won any awards? To date six Great Taste Awards including three golds. We've also won gold at the Sloe Gin Awards and two of our liqueurs are currently used in Harvey Nichols cocktail bars.
What do the judges say? Ours is 'sophisticated, the epitome of sloe gin'. It has a medium-matured oak nose with subtle floral scents, a medium sweetness and is full bodied with a warming bittersweet finish.
What's the best way to serve it? Try with Champagne, or as an after-dinner drink, or for sipping by the fire. It's also great in fruit cake recipes or, as a cure for colds, a slug in warmed orange juice.
Any other drinks we might like to try? We also make sloe port, sloe whisky, damson port and damson gin. And this year we've launched a gooseberry gin and a rhubarb gin.



Raisthorpe Manor sloe gin, £23.95 for 70cl. For more details call 01377 288295, raisthorpe manor.com.



Unusual... versatile... seasonal gem

Celebrate medlars

Now's the time to look out for medlars at farmer's markets and in farm shops (unless, of course, you're lucky enough to have your own tree). They look like a cross between a small apple and a rosehip with a russet-coloured skin, and their flavour is similar to apple mixed with cinnamon. The taste has also been likened to toffee apples and the darkened, softened ripe fruit is commonly set into a jewel-like jelly, great for serving with game and goose, cold meat and cheese. Medlars also work well in chutney or try roasting them to serve with a joint. For a sweet option, bake the ripe fruit and serve with cream, or fill homebaked tarts.

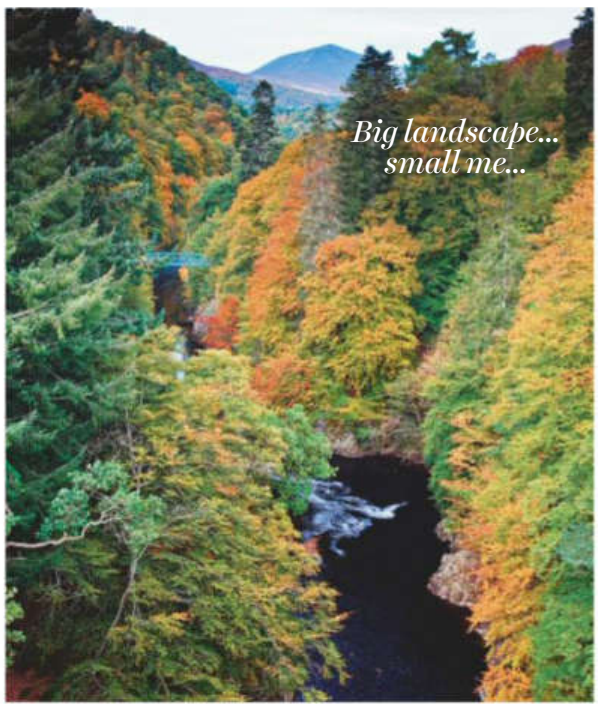


The ultimate comfort food

Prestat has whipped up its refined chocolate into a range of spreads perfect for toast, warm croissants or sandwiching in homemade cakes. Choose from six flavours, including Divine Clementine and Heavenly Hazelnut. Posh Chocolate Spread, £5.95 for 215g.

FEATURE SARAH WILSON **PHOTOGRAPH** (MEDLARS) STOCKFOOD/OXANA AFANASIEVA

Out & about



Go wild for autumn

One of the most magnificent views at this time of year can be seen at the Pass of Killiecrankie in Perthshire (above), nts.org.uk. This wooded gorge on the River Garry is associated with an historic Jacobite battle, but today it is a peaceful place where visitors have the chance to spot nesting birds, red squirrels, leaping salmon and, in autumn, to watch a variety of trees turn spectacular shades of burgundy, amber, russet and gold. Or go wild in Grizedale Forest, Cumbria, forestry.gov.uk/grizedale, where the Ridding Wood trail offers stunning views of the valley and a hike to the top of Carron Crag reveals panoramic vistas of this unspoilt landscape with its heady mix of autumn colours.

The place to eat...

The Five Alls is a picture-perfect Cotswolds coaching inn. Dating from the 18th century, it boasts original flagstone floors, inglenook fireplaces and exposed beams. Menus promise delicious turf-to-table British-style food with a touch of Italian – and rooms are available if you want to stay the night after sampling local casked ales in the cosy bar. Visit thefiveallsfilkins.co.uk.





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Learn how to make your own natural skincare. Herbalists Jude Greenan and Vanessa Neville share their wild-plant know-how at Assington Mill in Suffolk. The course, on 29 November, costs £75 plus materials (about £10) and you can take home four jars of cosmetics. Call 01787 229955, assingtonmill.com.

OUR FAVOURITE SHOP

Tinsmiths

Owners Alex and Phoebe Clive sell fabrics, lighting, art prints and gifts in this wonderfully quirky building in Herefordshire.

What inspired you to open Tinsmiths? We were inspired by a passion for good design with a long 'shelf life', both practically and stylistically. All our staff are makers or designers who understand materials and processes. Our main focus is centred on textiles – fabrics for curtains, blinds and upholstery.

How would you describe the shop's style? Our two showrooms, architecturally speaking, are characteristic of the Tinsmiths style. On the one hand, a surprisingly bold and daring shopfront (above right) designed and built by Alex and, on the other, an ancient timber-framed workshop made user-friendly by modern interventions. We really enjoy the challenge of mixing old and new, industrial and domestic to achieve timeless interiors.

What makes your shop so special? The people. We think hard about what we are offering and take this responsibility seriously, in terms of what we display in our shop and when we





set about making curtains or blinds for a client. We like to source fabrics, lighting and homewares close to home, where possible, such as fabrics woven in the north of England, pots thrown in the surrounding area, and kitchen utensils, hooks and ironwork from local makers. **Tinsmiths, Tinsmiths Alley, 8a High Street, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 1DS, 01531 632083, tinsmiths.co.uk.**

FEATURE COLUMBA COLIVET **PHOTOGRAPHS** (AUTUMN TREES) SCOTIMAGE/ALAMY; (DIY BEAUTY) SHUTTERSTOCK



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PHILIPPA HARTLEY'S IDYLLIC HOME EFFORTLESSLY BLENDS COUNTRY AND COASTAL STYLE



Garden (Opposite) Windfalls and faded hydrangeas make a pretty seasonal display.

Local walk Philippa, Ned and Clemmie enjoy a stroll beside Batson Creek. »





Courtyard **The pizza oven was built by Philippa's husband, Jim.**



House **Originally a forge built in 1850, the cottage is Grade II-listed.**

What we love most about living here...

'The amazing outlook – we are so close to the sea and a busy town, yet out in our garden we are away from everything'



The fish plates were brought back from a trip to Barbados. Dresser, similar from Neptune.







Living room (Also far left) Pops of warm red, plaid and cable-knit cushions keep the look cosy, while a rustic table made from a threshing machine is the focal point. **Sofa,** Laura Ashley. **Coffee table,** Portobello Road Market. »



Kitchen The dining area opens onto the garden through full-height glass doors. **Table, benches,** similar from The Cotswold Company. **Chair,** Ikea. **Flooring,** Mandarin Stone.

'I wanted to live in the countryside, in a house that was old and had character, and my husband, Jim, just wanted to be by the sea,' says Philippa Hartley. As she was living in London before they married and Jim was based in Devon, it made sense that they look for a home together down there.

And the house they found ticked all the boxes – a former forge with bags of character and a beautiful courtyard garden, close to the coast. But it had already been on the market for 18 months because it hadn't been touched since the 1970s.

The sale went through in October 2010, but the couple didn't actually move in until about 10 months later, living with Jim's mum while the renovations took place.

'We took the house apart ourselves and gutted it,' says Philippa. They had to change everything. 'We replaced the wiring and the plumbing, and replastered throughout. We insulated everything and installed underfloor heating, and fitted radiators upstairs.' New ceilings and floors were also put in, as well as period-style windows, and beams downstairs to bring back original character.

The layout was also reconfigured. 'What is now the open-plan kitchen/living/dining area was where garages and workshops once stood, so we needed planning permission to turn them into a family space looking out onto the garden,' says Philippa.

The original kitchen was upstairs, but Philippa and Jim were keen to use that space as an office and living room, with a statement wall incorporating a woodburner separating the two. 'We hacked away upstairs and found some lovely slate, so that became the hearth for the woodburner. We used wood from an old pier found in a reclamation yard for a lintel above the fireplace.'

New bathrooms were installed and again period pieces played their part. The en suite features an antique bath. 'The bathroom window had to come out so we could bring it in,' says Philippa.

When it came to decorating, she wanted to create a coastal-meets-country style. All the walls were painted white and many of the rooms are blue and white. 'It's one of my favourite colour schemes, however, I have warmed things up in the upstairs living room, which feels slightly more colourful and country.'

The decorating process was organic. 'We collected things slowly as we wanted to buy things that we liked rather than needed,' says Philippa. 'Jim found some antique chairs for the living room and I thought he was mad when I first saw them, but we sent them away to be reupholstered and now I think they're beautiful.'

Since the couple moved in, Ned and Clemmie have been born and the house has proved to be a wonderful family home. 'It's beautiful here. The children have a lovely garden to play in and we have coast and country – the best of both worlds,' says Philippa. »



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Philippa Hartley, who runs Fish & Pips, a business offering catered ski chalets, and her husband, Jim, the founder of clothing company Aloft. They moved here in 2011 and live with their two children, Ned, four, and Clemmie, two.

House A Grade II-listed converted Victorian forge, built in 1850, which has four bedrooms.





Main bedroom **(Also below left) A wardrobe from Jim's childhood has been given a shabby chic finish. Cushion, Ikea. Tray table, The White Company.**





What makes this house a home...

'Its higgledy piggledy nature, and the fact that we gutted the property and so made every decision on how to change the house to fit our needs'







FEATURE VIVIENNE AYERS **PHOTOGRAPHS** POLLY ELTES

SEE PAGE 173 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES



Bathroom A vaulted ceiling and an antique freestanding bath give this en suite the wow factor. The basin (centre left) is mounted on an antique cupboard. **Rugs,** similar from Ikea. **Lantern,** John Lewis. »



Garden A teepee made from sailcloth is the perfect playhouse for the children.

ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Kingsbridge Estuary. We love to take a boat and moor up towards Frogmore by a little stone beach we can have to ourselves.'

Shop at... 'The Bake House bakery (01548 842824, bakehousesalcombe.co.uk), Salcombe, for delicious doughnuts.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Sloop Inn (01548 560489, thesloop.co.uk), Bantham, after a walk on the beach. It's a 14th-century pub that serves great food. Or we all like crabbing in Salcombe, followed by a pizza at Captain Flint's (01548 842357, captainflints.co.uk).' »



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www.heals.com



Add comfort underfoot. Kabir Goby **rug,** 200x295cm, £625, John Lewis.



Go for classic accessories. Cashmere **cushion,** 40cm sq, £175, Johnstons of Elgin. Tea Tree lamp **base,** H42cm, £150; silk pleat **shade,** £69, both India Jane.



Modern Country Classic

Double-sided stove

Face the fire from both sides with a stove that has twice the appeal.

Need to know...

Two adjoining rooms that share a chimney can also share a stove, with doors either side supplying warmth and a great view. Traditional designs with a canopy sit comfortably in a fireplace. Alternatively, a contemporary double-sided stove makes a great room divider for an open-plan area with the flue soaring up to the ceiling. High output versions are available to heat big spaces.

Where to buy...

- **Yeoman Stoves** for wood, multifuel and gas stoves with canopies.
- **Firebelly Stoves** for a contemporary double-sided stove.
- **Stoves Online** for a double-sided stove suitable for smoke control areas.



Bring in a touch of gold. Monaco **frame,** 91x122cm, £230, Ayers & Graces. Vintage **trunk,** H54xW78x D60cm, £375, The Old Cinema.

Be inspired by Philippa's living room

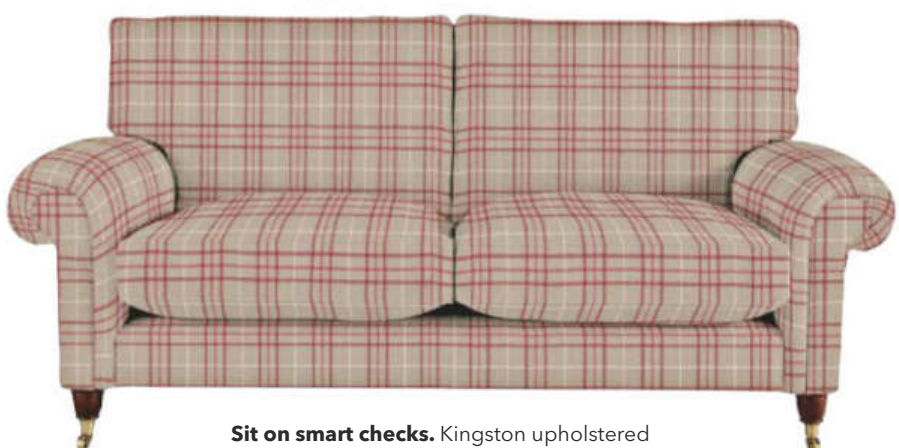
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Sit on smart checks. Kingston upholstered large two-seater **sofa** in Keynes Cranberry, H92xW215xD98cm, £1,800, Laura Ashley.

FEATURE HOLLY PHILLIPS, CAROLINE RODRIGUES

SEE PAGE 173 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES



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George large sofa in Brancaster Navy washed linen £1,975; Penelope velvet cushion in Fox £40; Fox velvet £40/metre; Smoke emulsion £34 for 2.5L; Somerton willow basket from £115; Kingswood throw £100

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Warm hearted

CLAIRE SIMPSON HAS DESIGNED A RICH AND DEEPLY COMFORTABLE HOME IN A WING OF A NEWLY CONVERTED HALL



Living room The open fire with its classic surround is at the heart of this cosy room. **Walls,** painted in Chocolate by Little Greene. **Sofas,** Sofa.com. Blue table **lamps,** India Jane. »



Living room Pale embroidered cushion covers on the window seat add texture and act as a foil to the dark walls. **Fabric,** de Le Cuona.



Kitchen Neutral shades for the walls and units create an elegant country feel. **Walls, units,** painted in Portland Stone by Little Greene.



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Interior designer Claire Simpson and her husband, Fraser, a foreign currency broker, who moved to the hall in 2011 with their two children, Chloe, now five, and Freddie, three, plus their West Highland Terrier, Winnie.

House A wing of a 17th-century Grade II-listed hall.

There's nothing like having a young family to inspire a move to the country, where life seems to move at a slower pace, seasons are marked by traditional rituals and children are able to run free surrounded by the beauty of nature. Claire and Fraser Simpson had been living a rustic Italian dream in Puglia in a *masseria* (large farmhouse), which they'd had built, but once their first child, Chloe, was born and then with son Freddie on the way, they began to hanker for England once more.

'We wanted to put down some roots,' says Claire. 'Then, one gorgeous sunny weekend, we were visiting Fraser's father in a cottage in the grounds of a historic hall in Leicestershire. We had owned the cottage before he moved there, so the estate had long been familiar to us. We then discovered that part of the hall (it had been divided into three separate dwellings) was up for sale. News of it coming on to the market opened our eyes up to the possibility of settling back here.

'The hall has always been a very special place for us,' Claire continues. 'Interestingly, it was once owned by the Spencer family. Princess Diana, in fact, is reputed to have visited many times as a child so that gives it a certain magic.'

When it came to making the decision to buy, Claire and Fraser were fortunate to have a completely blank slate from which to work, just as Claire likes it. 'We'd sold our last three houses »



Dining area **Huge French doors fill the kitchen dining area with light, making it perfect for entertaining. The seascapes were painted by Fraser's father. Chairs,** Vincent Sheppard. Woven rattan **chargers,** Not on the High Street. **Table,** Sunbury Antiques Market.

What we love most about living here...

'The stunning garden with uninterrupted views of the countryside – cows and sheep to the front, woodland to the side and horses at the back'



What makes this house a home...
'It's somewhere that makes us feel happy and safe, where we can totally relax as a family'

Family room As this space has limited natural light, Claire chose a darker palette to create a warm, cocooning feel. The panelling and bookshelves were made specially to her design. **Walls, cabinetry,** all painted in Knightsbridge by Little Greene. Alpaca **throw,** Alpaca Clothing Market.





Hallway **A Swedish blind in heavy linen dresses the mullion window. Fabric, de Le Cuona. Tiles, Mandarin Stone.**

with almost all of the contents included, which allowed us to start over. It's easier, and I find it very exciting, to begin again and not be bound by earlier choices,' she says. 'Besides, as we had moved from west London to an English country house via rural Italy, things were always going to look very different. Everything here has been specifically sourced for the hall.'

Claire acknowledges that working in the interior design industry means that she is exposed to many beautiful and innovative ideas, which accounts for her desire to start from scratch. 'I have a real need for change and experimentation, and I'm lucky to be allowed the freedom to do so,' she says.

Claire's design philosophy is simple: 'I always think long term rather than being swayed by up-to-the-minute trends. I like to let a scheme evolve gradually, while leaving room for a new addition to keep up my interest and reflect changing trends.'

Moving in when Claire was five months pregnant meant that the couple's greatest priorities were the children's bedrooms and their bathroom. Somehow, though, Claire was reluctant to let the builders disappear once work had begun, and they ended up with a major renovation on their hands. Stud walls were torn down, bathrooms replaced, walls were panelled throughout, bookcases built and the hallway floor was fitted with striking marble flagstones. Reclaimed stone fireplaces were sourced to replace the »



Garden **An old lime tree is the ideal spot for the children's swing, where Claire can keep an eye through the French doors.**


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Main bedroom (Also right) Claire has created an opulent sanctuary, inspired by hotel stays. **Walls,** painted in French Grey by Little Greene. **Bath,** The Albion Bath Company. **Bedspread,** Christy.

existing modern ones. Then, as if one complete refit wasn't enough, much of the hall had to be redone a couple of years later.

'I came back one day with the children to find Fraser standing helplessly at the door,' Claire says. 'We'd had an enormous leak in the roof after a heavy snowstorm and water was pouring into the top bedroom. The damage was much worse than we thought and we ended up having to replace joinery plus two ceilings as well as carpets and curtains.' Claire wasn't fazed though and actually relished the opportunity 'to try something completely new, again'.

Now that the house is complete – at least for the moment – the family can enjoy the space, particularly the garden with its wide lawns that open on to vistas across the Leicestershire landscape. A swimming pool ensures that there's no chance of the family feeling isolated, as friends are always happy to visit.

'We can sleep up to 12, so often we have a house full at weekends,' Claire says. 'Summer is when the pool comes into its own, while autumn is all about long country walks and Sunday lunches, followed by flopping down in front of the fire. Idyllic!'

There are no regrets whatsoever about moving back from Italy to England. 'This house is just what I'd hoped for – a great place to bring up the children, where they can be happy and carefree. Why would we want to live anywhere else?'

☎ **clairesimpsoninteriors.com.** »



ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Bradgate Park (01162 362713, bradgatepark.org) at Newtown Linford, with its folly, ancient woodland and a deer park.'

Shop at... 'Bagel & Griff (01858 468764, bagelandgriff.com). A gem of a shop in Market Harborough with ethically produced homewares.'

Go for a meal at... 'The George of Stamford (01780 750750, georgehotelofstamford.com). Great for Sunday lunch, with open fires, comfy sofas and an atmospheric, panelled dining room.'

FEATURE SARAH BOLTON **PHOTOGRAPHS** MARK BOLTON



Bathroom Claire wanted something whimsical here but in a similar palette to elsewhere. **Wallpaper**, Mulberry Home at John Lewis. **Panelling,** painted in French Grey Dark by Little Greene. **Bath,** Burlington. »

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Choose clean lines. Edwardian round **basin, towel rail** and regal **pedestal,** H96xW62xD51cm, £335, Burlington.



Use natural storage. Wicker **basket,** H25x W44xD30cm, £9.99, East2Eden. Duck Egg **towels,** from £2, Linea at House of Fraser.



Modern Country Classic

Bateau bath

Raised ends and centrally placed taps give this bath its pleasingly symmetrical appearance.

Need to know...

Unlike a classic roll-top bath on claw feet, the bateau style has a skirt that extends to the floor, sometimes with a plinth, for a sleek effect and ease of cleaning. Traditional cast-iron versions with a painted exterior lend a timeless air, with cast-stone resin or aluminium the modern equivalents. For a stylish shimmer, select a lightweight copper bath, also available in a nickel finish or in nature-inspired verdigris.

Where to buy...

- **Catchpole & Rye** for a classic cast-iron bain de bateau.
- **Victoria & Albert** for several bateau shapes in limestone and resin.
- **William Holland** for a copper design.



Take flight. Flying Ducks **wallpaper,** £79 a roll, Mulberry Home at John Lewis. Wall **light,** 23x10cm, £39, Bathstore.

Be inspired by

Claire's family bathroom

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1 Kent Grey; **2** Iron Grey; **3** Grey Squirrel, all £24.50 for 1L water-based matt emulsion, Sanderson.



Look and smell nice! Clarence **mirror,** H50cm, £42.99, Homebase. Lugano **soap pump,** £147, Pigeon & Poodle at Amara.

For more ideas go to housetohome.co.uk/countryhomesandinteriors



Perch in comfort. Narrow wooden **stools,** H53cm and 38cm, £195 for 2, Out There Interiors.

FEATURE HOLLY PHILLIPS, CAROLINE RODRIGUES **PHOTOGRAPH** (PAINTS) RHAPSODY

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Living area A new woodburner keeps the space cosy. **Stove,** Morsø. **Rug,** Rooms with a View. **Walls,** painted in Clunch by Farrow & Ball.

Entrance Debbie (right, with Tolly and Winston) is thrilled with the rustic stable door and bespoke house sign. **Door,** painted in Hardwick White by Farrow & Ball. **Sign,** Campbell & Cornell. »







AT HOME WITH...

Owners Debbie and Dave Down, who run interior design and soft furnishings store Rooms with a View. Debbie's daughter, Jessica, 24, and son, George, 21, enjoy visiting the cottage. Border Terriers Tolly and Winston complete the household.

House One-bedroom cottage near the coast, built in the early 1800s.

As soon as an internet search brought up this pretty cottage in an unspoilt spot on the North Norfolk coast, Debbie Down was hooked. 'The cottage was up for auction,' she says. 'We had a scruffy caravan up here and we had come to know and love the area – when you're in this part of the world, it feels like going back in time.'

Debbie and her husband, Dave, who together run a successful interior design and soft furnishing store, Rooms with a View, in Diss, were taken at once by the opportunity to create an ultra-comfortable weekend retreat, somewhere much more roomy and welcoming than their caravan.

There was an awful lot of renovation, however, to be done first. Originally built as part of a row of farm workers' cottages, which had been knocked together years ago, their part of the row had been closed off and unused since the 1960s.

'It was in a terrible state,' says Debbie, 'no staircase, no running water, no heating and plants growing up through the floor. I remember climbing up a ladder to the bedroom and seeing two gorgeous Victorian fireplaces and the original floorboards, and I knew from that moment that it had to be ours.'

As the couple were on a tight budget, they tackled the renovations themselves and spent every spare moment working on the cottage. 'Dave did the »

Living area Coats are hung by the door above a rush-seat bench for pulling on boots. What few ornaments there are are carefully chosen. **Bench, rail,** both Garden Trading. **Cushion,** Feather & Egg **lamp shade,** both Rooms with a View. **Terrier on wheels,** Northfield Primitives.



Kitchen The couple painted the units and added satin nickel door knobs for a bespoke look. The bird was carved by Dave. Shaker **units,** Jewson; painted in Pigeon by Farrow & Ball. **Handles,** Willow & Stone. Oak **worktop,** similar from Worktop Express. **Sink,** Villeroy & Boch.

What we love most about living here...

'We can really relax and unwind here. It's such a peaceful place to be'



Living area **A welcoming wool tartan tones well with the heather sofa and leather armchair. Footstool, covered in Skye, col Burnt Orange, by Abraham Moon & Son; wood tray, both Rooms with a View.**



Kitchen **A peninsula built by Dave and clad in tongue-and-groove panelling, also used for the splashback, divides the working area of the kitchen from the rest of the scheme. Open display shelves stop the furniture from overpowering the space. Peninsula, splashback, both painted in Old White by Farrow & Ball.**

Garden **Dave's handiwork extends even to the outdoor firewood store, which he built from wood and reclaimed tiles.**

plumbing, lighting and heating, built a new staircase and fitted the kitchen and bathroom, while I tiled the bathroom, and painted every wall and window frame,' Debbie says. In fact, the only job the Downs hired someone else to do was the plastering.

A happy moment during the renovations was the discovery of traditional East Anglian terracotta pamments under the floor Dave was digging up to put in a damp-proof membrane and insulation. The tiles now form the floor of the outdoor seating area.

But it wasn't all plain sailing and chance finds. 'Everything seemed to get worse before it got better,' Debbie says. 'I spent a whole weekend peeling wallpaper off the bedroom ceiling, which gave me a bad back for six months. And the dogs used to hate it. They would sit in the corner, shivering and willing us to get them out of there.'

What kept Debbie and Dave going was a sense of how lovely the place could be. As the plan was to create a luxurious bolthole, they chose not to compromise the upstairs space by squashing in another bedroom, deciding instead to devote the first floor to one large bedroom and bathroom. 'I'm really glad we did that because the space feels so light and open, and rather indulgent,' says Debbie.

Similarly, the ground floor has been designed for open-plan living to boost the sense of space. 'We »



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What makes this house a home...

'I think we appreciate the cottage all the more, having done the work ourselves and poured so much love into it'



Bathroom **Designed to look like an original feature, the cupboard beside the Victorian fireplace, where towels are kept, was fashioned by Dave from a disused door. Bath, similar from Frontline Bathrooms.** »





ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Felbrigg Hall (01263 837444, nationaltrust.org.uk) near Norwich for its rolling landscaped park and woods. It's a beautiful place to walk the dogs, and the estate is so large we rarely see another soul there.'

Shop at... 'Byfords (01263 711400, byfords.org.uk) in Holt, a café, store and bakery in a historic building. It's a lovely place to have lunch or pick up sausage rolls for a picnic, or to buy something yummy for taking home for supper.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Vernon Arms (01263 833355, vernonarms.com) in Southrepps. It's a proper old-fashioned brick and cobble pub with a friendly welcome and great home-cooked food. We also like it because we can take the dogs into the bar.'

had to be very creative,' says Debbie, 'as we wanted everything you'd expect in a comfy home but didn't want the washing machine or boiler on show.'

One solution was to hide the boiler in a specially built cupboard in the living area next to the fireplace. Another was to design an L-shaped kitchen to zone the space from the living area with plenty of base units for concealing appliances.

Debbie had always harboured a passion for interior design, encouraged by her mother and grandmother, and began visualising the soft colours and fabrics for each room early on in the project. 'I think I nearly drove Dave mad, waving my paint swatches around. He kept telling me that we weren't anywhere near that stage yet,' she says. 'But I had to see the light at the end of the tunnel. When I finally got to the point that I could decorate and dress the cottage, it was such a pleasure – I'd had everything in my head for those 18 long months.'

The result of Debbie's decorating vision is a light yet cosy space based around a soothing palette of chalky country hues, textural fabrics and natural motifs. She and Dave now spend as many weekends at the cottage as they possibly can, walking the dogs, relaxing and reading. 'It's a lovely escape,' she says.

☎ To stay at Hollyhock Cottage, call 07876 233575 or visit hollyhockcottagenorfolk.com. »

Bedroom **Debbie created a vintage look, dressing the bed in a quilt of faded florals she made herself, and painting the old Lloyd Loom bedside cabinet. Walls,** painted in Clunch; **cabinet,** painted in Hardwick White, both by Farrow & Ball. **Lampshades,** covered by Debbie in Dusty Pink Dots linen by Peony & Sage; **cushions, lamps, valance** in Normandy Stripe, all Rooms with a View.

FEATURE AMELIA THORPE **PHOTOGRAPHS** CHARLOTTE COWARD-WILLIAMS

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Create a pretty display with glass vases and single blooms. Mini **vases,** H8cm, £7.99 for 3, H&M Home.



Mix curves and stripes. Winchester **fabric,** £22 m, The Natural Curtain Company. **Lamp,** H59, £39, Marquis & Dawe.



Modern Country Classic

French wooden bed

Who could resist a night in a curvy French bed? With rich warm tones and a show-off crest, a classic polished wood bed is the hero buy for a country bedroom

Need to know...

Rosewood, walnut, mahogany and cherry are the timbers to choose for a beautiful patina, especially when a quartered diamond-matched veneer pattern or more elaborate parquetry design shows off the grain. Take care when buying an antique, as the sizes may not correspond to modern mattresses. Check that the original side rails are supplied and whether slats or a box base can be provided.

Where to buy...

- **Bedsteads** for antique beds and a restoration service.
- **Crown French Furniture** for reproduction carved beds.
- **The French Depot** for antique beds.

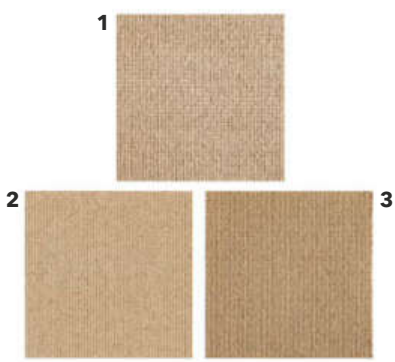


Plump for comfort. Tulips & Roses **cushion cover,** 86x58cm, £68, Cabbages & Roses. Vintage **jar,** H8.5cm, £10, Velvet Ribbon.

Be inspired by

Debbie's vintage bedroom

FIND THE PERFECT NEUTRAL WOOL CARPET



1 Affluence, col Chalk, £70 sq m; **2** Coast, col Sand, £50 sq m; **3** Affluence, col Biscuit, £70 sq m, all Crucial Trading.



Add depth with dark wood. Broughton **chest of drawers,** H109x W110xD56cm, £1,050, Laura Ashley.



Snuggle up. Martha Rose **quilt,** 240x260cm, £89.99, Coast & Country Interiors. **Squirrel,** H27cm, £20, Cottontails Baby.

FEATURE HOLLY PHILLIPS, CAROLINE RODRIGUES

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Rustic luxe

CLAIRE SMITH RESTORED A RUNDOWN FARMHOUSE INTO A HANDSOME MODERN COUNTRY HOME



Dining room
Sumptuous fabrics create a grand, comfortable feel. **Table,** Ebay. **Chairs,** Neptune. **Chandelier,** Laura Ashley. »



Kitchen Claire went for soft tones for a soothing yet bright scheme. **Cabinetry,** Pre-Eminence, painted in Olive and Farrow's Cream by Farrow & Ball.



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Claire Smith, finance director of an engineering company, and her husband Duncan, an arboricultural consultant. They have two Border Collies, Mac and Milo, and a cat called Millie. They moved here in 2004.

House A five-bedroom country house set in 3½ acres, built in 1876 for a gentleman farmer.

'It's an incredibly handsome house in a beautiful setting,' says Claire Smith of her country home. 'We were looking for a classic Georgian double-fronted property and we didn't think we'd find one in Derbyshire, where I'm from, because most of the houses here are cottages.' But Claire and her husband, Duncan, having already sold their house (a barn outside Nottingham) and needing to find a new home quickly, struck lucky with this five-bedroomed farmhouse.

'A succession of owners had each left their mark on it,' says Claire. 'The classic layout of four square rooms downstairs had been changed and it didn't work. Features had also been removed, but we could see the potential. It's a grand house without being ridiculously large. We instantly loved it, but it was the garden that really sold it to us – it reminded me of the park near my gran's house. I felt I was at home.'

It was only after they had bought the house that they realised the scale of the work involved in restoring it. 'It was a good job we were naive or we wouldn't have taken it on!' says Claire. Horrors awaiting them included a shower cubicle in a bedroom that was wired into the plug socket with speaker cable. But, the biggest shock was in the coach house. 'We thought we could live there while we were doing up the house,' says Claire. 'However, when we went into the loft, we discovered that all that was holding up the roof was a flimsy architrave. It moved an inch overnight and the structural engineer said that there was no way we could live there.'

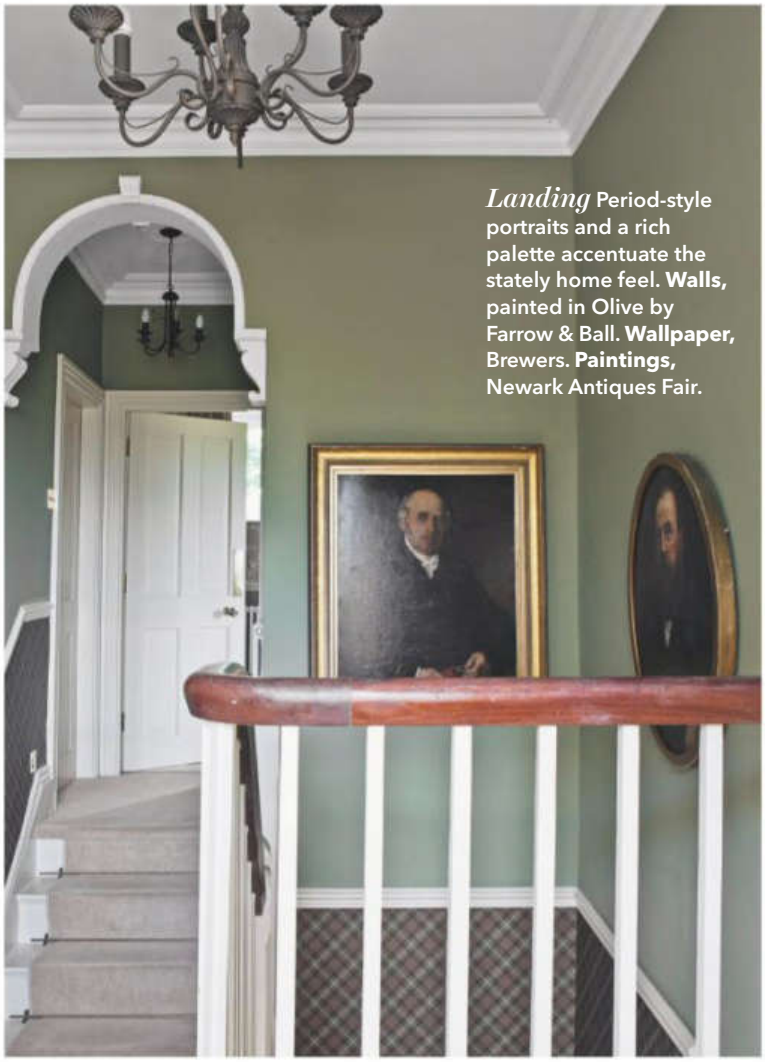
This meant that Claire and Duncan had to live in the main house while they were renovating it. 'We moved from room to room for a good two years,' she says. The house was stripped back completely, with all the plaster removed and floors ripped up. The amount of »

What makes this house a home...

'We aren't precious about anything – it's not a showpiece. Every area is used and enjoyed'



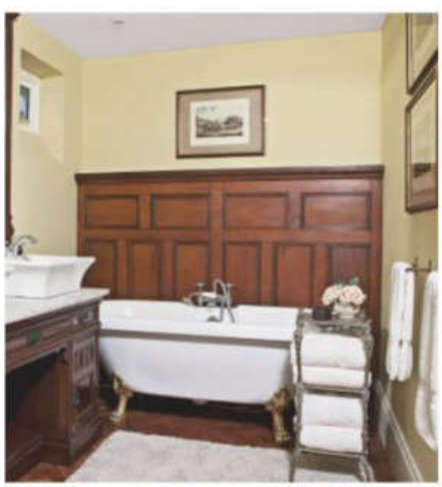
Orangery This room links the coach house with the main house and Claire has used new finds and antiques to create a relaxed and elegant look. **Sofas,** DFS. **Coffee table,** Multiyork.



Landing Period-style portraits and a rich palette accentuate the stately home feel. **Walls,** painted in Olive by Farrow & Ball. **Wallpaper,** Brewers. **Paintings,** Newark Antiques Fair.



Main bedroom Layers of tactile fabrics create a sense of luxury in this neutral scheme. **Bedlinen,** The White Company. **Throw,** Ikea. **Wallpaper,** Cole & Son. **Chandelier,** Laura Ashley.



Bathroom Claire created a strong masculine feel with panelling reclaimed from a library in Mansfield. **Basins,** Bathstore, fitted to the top of an antique desk from Matlock Antiques. **Bath,** Ebay. **Towel rack,** found at Newark Antiques Fair. **Walls,** painted in Gervase Yellow by Farrow & Ball.

work done was enormous – from re-roofing to putting in new electrics, plumbing and drainage. The house was also insulated and underfloor heating installed. 'Inside, nothing is original, apart from part of the ceiling and the staircase. The benefit of stripping it back to the bones, however, was that we could then reorganise the layout.'

Claire and Duncan did a huge amount of the work themselves. 'We were on a limited budget and, as we were both working, we were up early every weekend and spent every night working on it. We got in specialists and we laboured for them to cut costs. It took four years before the house was habitable. It was in such a state that my mother-in-law nicknamed it Bleak House!' Then, in 2009 they embarked on a project to connect the coach house to the house with a new orangery. 'We rebuilt the coach house as close to the original as we could but to modern standards, facing it with the existing stone.'

For the decor, Claire had a clear idea of the look she wanted. 'I was keen to reflect that it had been a gentleman's house and chose quite a masculine look,' she says. 'I feel like the guardian of the house. James Redfern built it (his name is above the door) and we think he'd be proud of it now. I love tactile fabrics such as tweed, wool and velvet so have incorporated them to create a relaxing and homely feel in a palette of red, green and earthy tones. Lots of things were sourced from Ebay and auctions and we used as many reclaimed pieces as we could.'

The house was finished nine months ago. 'It was an incredible amount of work and took a lot longer than we expected, but now we love sitting back and enjoying our beautiful house. We have fantastic views. There is no light pollution and it is spectacular at night-time. We can be here all day and never see a soul. It's so peaceful.' »

What we love most about living here...

'All the little added touches of luxury that make us feel spoilt and ensure it's a really lovely place to be'

Guest bedroom Claire smartened up her cushions by sewing on buckles found on Ebay. **Bedlinen, cushions,** Ikea. **Wallpaper,** Ralph Lauren Home. **Wall lights,** Jim Lawrence. **Beds, trunk,** Newark Antiques Fair.



ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Lumsdale waterfalls, walking past a millpond and a derelict mill preserved by the Arkwright Society. It's not a well-known route, but it's lovely at any time of year – a little gem.'

Shop at... 'Seymour Interiors (01629 826622, seymourinteriors.co.uk) in Wirksworth. It's a little independent shop with a good range of paints, and they also mix their own. You can spend hours flicking through the fabric books.'

Go for a meal at... 'The White Hart Inn (01629 534888, thewhitehartmoorwoodmoor.co.uk) at Morwood Moor. It has been completely refurbished and the food is fantastic, with a very friendly atmosphere.' »

House The farmhouse was built in 1876 for a gentleman farmer and has stunning views over the rolling Derbyshire countryside.

FEATURE VIVIENNE AYERS **PHOTOGRAPHS** LU JEFFERY

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Dine in comfort on upholstered seating. Henley **chair,** H94xW58x D68cm, col Millet, £340, Neptune.



Pick lighting with the wow factor. The Toft wrought-iron **chandelier,** £785, Belico.



Modern Country Classic



Choose tableware with delicate detailing. Blue Asiatic Pheasants **plate,** 25.5cm, £15, Burleigh. Art Deco Style **decanter,** H25.5cm, £35, John Lewis.

Be inspired by

Claire's dining room

Box pelmet

Complete a window in style with a formal, tailored look.

Need to know...

A pelmet can be used to alter the proportions of a window or French doors – great for creating the illusion of extra height. Box pelmets are made by wrapping fabric around an adhesive-backed stiffener, buckram or a foam board, which is then attached to a support board on brackets above the window. Shaped edges and piping can add a personal touch. Painted MDF pelmets with decorative edges are an alternative to fabric versions.

Where to buy...

- **Merrick & Day** for a range of pelmet-making supplies.
- **Topline** for foam board pelmets, ready to cover.
- **Jali** for solid pelmets with shaped edges.

FIND THE PERFECT PAINT



1 Charleston Gray; **2** London Stone; **3** Mouse's Back, all from £38.99 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball at Homebase.

For more ideas go to housetohome.co.uk/countryhomesandinteriors



Go for classic workmanship. Mahogany oval **table,** H77xW213xD122cm, £6,650, Titchmarsh & Goodwin.

FEATURE ROSY JOHNSON, CAROLINE RODRIGUES **PHOTOGRAPH** (PAINT) RHAPSODY

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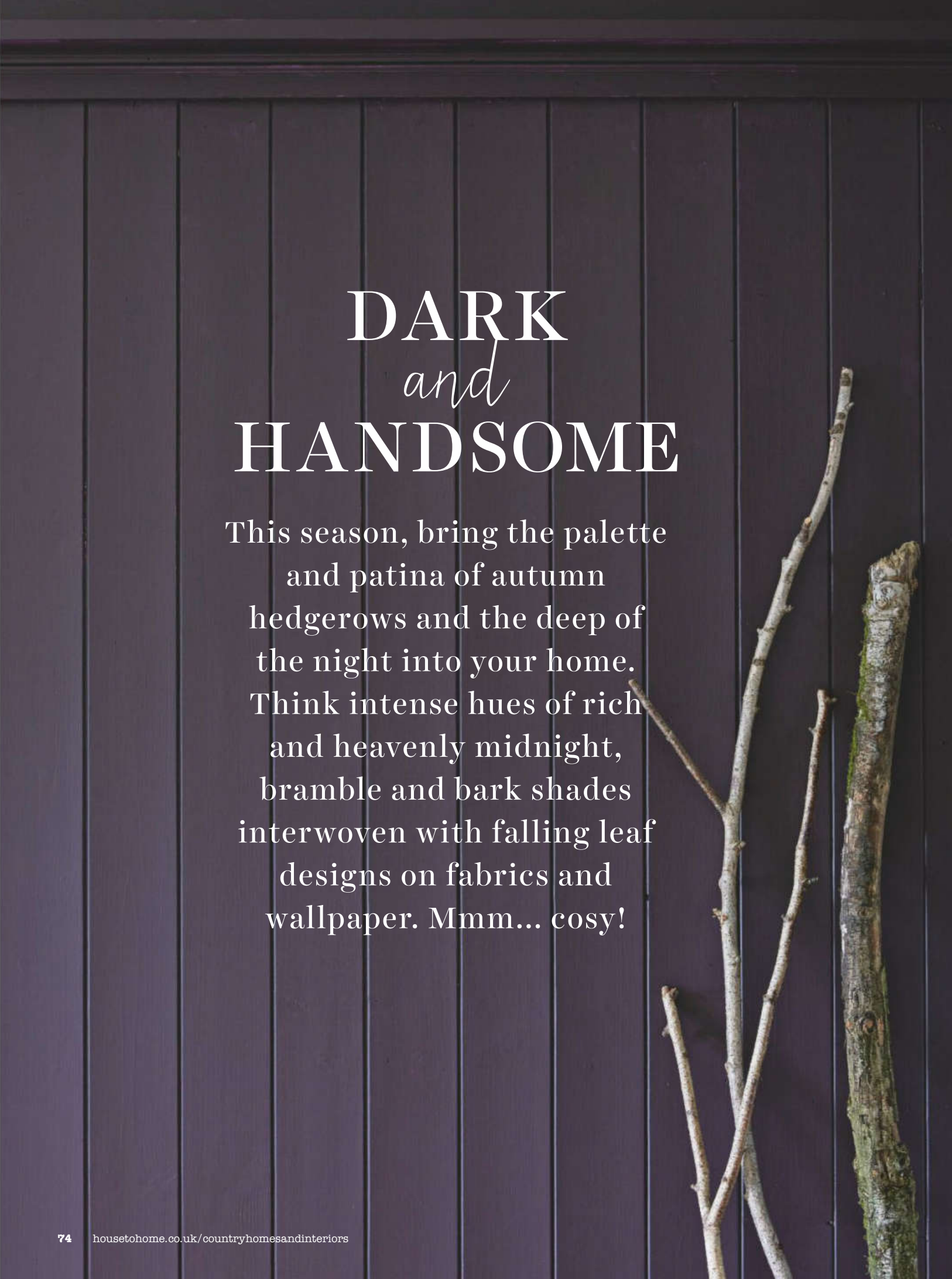
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DARK *and* HANDSOME

This season, bring the palette and patina of autumn hedgerows and the deep of the night into your home. Think intense hues of rich and heavenly midnight, bramble and bark shades interwoven with falling leaf designs on fabrics and wallpaper. Mmm... cosy!





Layer up windows

Beat chills with thick, layered Arts and Crafts curtains in indigo. Seasonal leaf-patterned prints on dark backgrounds go well with equally dusky painted walls. **See page 84 for details. »**



Add drama to worktops

Be bold with moody charcoal on painted kitchen units, splashbacks and beautiful baking accessories. Contrast with worn wooden surfaces and damson kitchenware. See page 84 for details.



Drape touchy-feely textiles

Cosy up by the logburner on a sofa furnished in plush plummy velvet. Layer throws in smart checks and handprinted cushions on seating and footstools.
See page 84 for details. »



Light the fire

Keep warming flames going with a fire-lighting kit of scented kindling and herbs. Choose a thundery grey-coloured pail to suit the darker blue wall.
See page 84 for details.



Create a comforting mood

Enjoy late-night dinners in a room clad in midnight-blue. Keep the look homely with checked and pheasant-print linens and decorate with natural foliage and branches. See page 84 for details. »



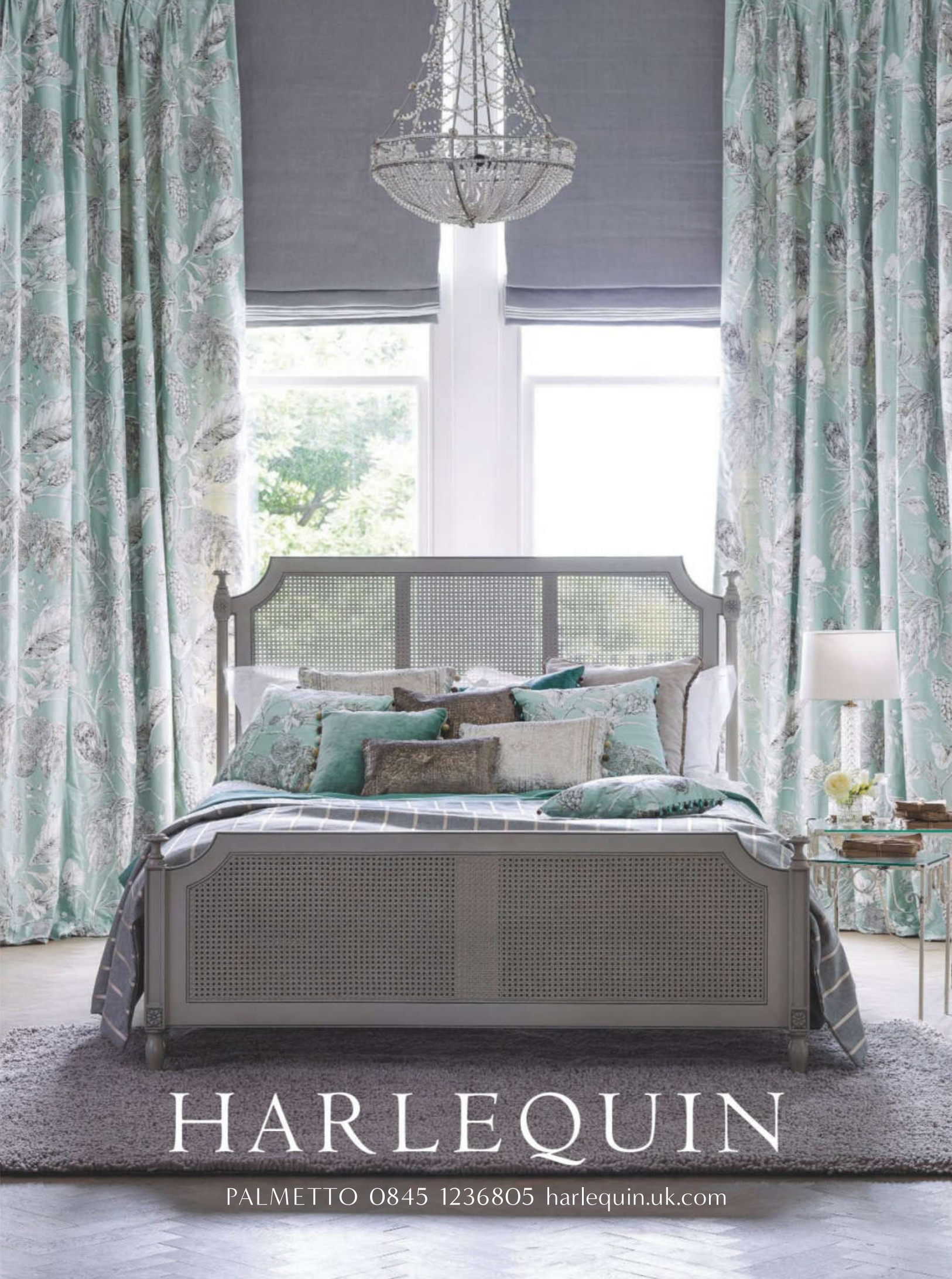
Dream in hedgerow hues

Choose blackberry and sloe-shaded paint colours for a luxurious look in a panelled bedroom. An upholstered button-back headboard adds an extra touch of indulgence to the scheme.
See page 84 for details.



Design surprise elements

Add a touch of loveliness inside cupboards with a wallpaper lining featuring a charcoal oak leaf pattern. Finish with a vintage wardrobe-top display. See page 84 for details. »


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Bask in the glow

Add a heady, intoxicating note to a bathroom with a reflective copper bath to enhance rich bramble wall tones. Accessorise with comforting fluffy towels and a toe-warming mat. See page 84 for details. »

All the details: PRODUCTS AND PRICES

Pages 74-75



LAYER UP WINDOWS

Wall, painted in Dukes House 44, £38 for 2.5L matt emulsion, Mylands. **Curtain,** Bramble, DM3P224463, £55 m, Morris & Co. **Curtain,** Plain Weave linen, col Natural, £32 m, Volga Linen. Buffet **cabinet,** £315, Graham and Green. (On shelf) stoneware **jug,** £8.95, Rigby & Mac. Green **bottles,** similar from Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. Marne **jug,** £10, Habitat. **String,** £2, Re. (On sideboard) **scarf,** from £45, Jane Eastwood. **Fabric,** Arran, col Amethyst, £49.50 m, Voyage. Blue **plate,** £29.50, Brickett Davda. **Jug,** £58, Another Country. **Mug,** £6.95, Broste at Rigby & Mac. Green **bottle,** similar from Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. (In cabinet) purple **vase,** from a selection, Tesco. **Jug,** £28.95, Broste at Rigby & Mac. Plum Asiatic Pheasant **bowl,** £36, Burleigh. **Throws,** £270 each, Jane Eastwood. **Bowl,** £86, Brickett Davda. **Vase,** £12 for 2, Next. Wire **basket,** £64, Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. Sheepskin **boots,** £135, Celtic & Co.

Pages 76-77



ADD DRAMA TO WORKTOPS

Units and panelling, painted in Charcoal, £42 for 2.5L eggshell, Neptune. (On shelf) **string,** £2, Re. Kahala **storage jars,** medium, £12 each; large, £15, all Habitat. Lucy Darkest **cup,** £20, Toast. Plum Asiatic Pheasant **plate,** £15, Burleigh. Wire **trivet,** £13.95, Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. Black Willow **bowl,** £14, Burleigh. Aubergine Sofia **plate,** £19.50, Toast. **Pestle and mortar,** £32, Laura Ashley. **Vase,** £20, Murmur. (On worktop) **napkins,** £16 for 4, Gray & Willow at House of Fraser. **Fabric,** Plaid Skye, U1104/EX77, col Moonstone, £49.95 m, Moon. **Pudding bowl,** from £29.50; Churn **jug,** £40; Calico **mug,** £15, all Burleigh. **Storage tin,** £12 for 3, Next. Vintage **rolling pin,** from £8.50, Re. Acacia **board,** £39.95 for 2, Rigby & Mac. Vintage **baking trays,** from £8.50 each, Re. Long Acacia **board,** £15; Cook's Collection cast-iron shallow **casserole dish,** col Purple, £45, both Sainsbury's.

DRAPE TOUCHY FEELY TEXTILES

Wall, painted in Stiffkey Blue, £38 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. Alwinton **footstool,** £305, Sofas & Stuff. Lovat **throw,** £167, Scotland Shop. Garden **bowl,** £45; **mug,** £25, both Brickett Davda. Nordic Sand **bowl,** £32.95, Rigby & Mac. **Table,** £160, John Lewis. (On table) **mug,** £20, Toast. **Jug,** £19.95, Rigby & Mac. Tamar **sofa,** £1,645, Content by Terence Conran. **Cushions** (from left): **1** Houndstooth, col Teal, £14.99, Dunelm. **2** Byron, DBYR233239, £77 m, Sanderson. **3** Marigold, £55 m, Morris & Co. **4** Mohair, £49.95, Bronte by Moon. Lambswool **throw,** £167, Scotland Shop. Shetland **throw,** £84, Adventino. **Lamp base,** £135; **shade,** £54, both Pooky. **Rug,** £299, John Lewis.

Pages 78-79



LIGHT THE FIRE

Charlotte **armchair** in Velvet, col Prussian Blue, £680, Sofa.com. **Cushion,** Byron DBYR233239, £77 m, Sanderson. Purple chenille **throw,** £29.99, Homebase. Check fabric (as **throw**), Cracoe, U1410/AB13, col Amethyst, £49.95 m, Moon. Shetland **throw,** £84, Adventino. Mulholland **cushion** (on floor), £45, Laura Ashley. Charcoal coal **bucket,** £18, Garden Trading. Fatwood fire **kindling bundles,** £7 each, Another Country. **Pine cone firelighters,** £12.95 for 12, Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. **Dustpan,** £7.70; **brush,** £18.50, both Iris Hantverk at Another Country. Classic **fire tool set,** £86, Morsø. Restoration **rug,** £299; **ribbons,** from a selection, all John Lewis.

CREATE A COMFORTING MOOD

Wall, painted in Royal Navy, £37 for 2.5L, Little Greene. **Sideboard,** £995, Neptune. **Printer's tray,** £48; **bell jar,** £58; similar **lantern,** all Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. Sofia **bowl,** £22.50, Toast. Checked **fabric,** Threshfield, U1436/D03, col Mystic Quartz, £49.95 m, Moon. Plain Weave **linens,** cols Lilac and Plum, £32 m, Volga Linen. **Mirror,** £90, Graham and Green. **Bench,** £855, Lilly Loray. **Throws,** £75 each, Bronte by Moon. **Carver,** £199, John Lewis. **Cushion,** Game Birds, FO768/01, £19 m, Clarke & Clarke. Nordic Sea **plates,** £14.95 each, Broste at Rigby & Mac. Earth **plates,** £13.95 each, Dassie. Medium **bowl,** £86; Garden **bowl,** £45, both Brickett Davda. **Jug,** £19.95, Rigby & Mac. **Candle,** £6, Neptune. **Plate,** £22, Brickett Davda. Calico **mug,** £15, Burleigh. **Napkins,** £32 for 4, Rowen & Wren. Fabrics (as **tablecloths,** from left): **1** Bramble, DM3P224462, £55 m, Morris & Co. **2** Byron, DBYR233240, £77 m, Sanderson. **3** Dunoon, £39.50 m, Ian Mankin. **Bucket,** Dee Puddy Home & Vintage.

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DREAM IN HEDGEROW HUES

Wall, painted in Pelt, £38 for 2.5L Estate Emulsion, Farrow & Ball. George double **headboard,** from £355; Chichester double **bed base,** £475, both Neptune. **Pillowcases,** cols Parisian Blue and Cassis Rose, £37.50 each; double **duvet cover,** col Parisian Blue, £170; flat **sheet,** col Cassis Rose, £115, all The Linen Works. **Cushions** (from back): **1** Navy, £39.50, Adventino. **2** Milton, DBYR233245, col Mulberry Sage, £77 m, Sanderson. **3** November Michael linen union, col Indigo, £75 m, Liberty Fabrics. Eco Deco striped **throw,** £270, Jane Eastwood. Sail **throw,** col Navy, £120, Murmur. Kennedy cashmere checked **throw,** £492, Scotland Shop. Tiffany **bed tray,** £20, Habitat. Grey **jug,** £16, Brickett Davda. Pebble **mug,** £6, Gray & Willow at House of Fraser. Plum Asiatic Pheasant **side plate,** £9.50, Burleigh. Alma side **table,** £60, Next. Black Willow **jug,** £27, Burleigh. Blue **string,** £1.50, Re. Storm **lantern,** col Cobalt, £29, Sparrow and Co.

DESIGN SURPRISE ELEMENTS

New Hampshire modular **wardrobe,** from a selection, The Dormy House. (On wardrobe) bottles and vintage **suitcase,** similar from Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. **Fabric,** Heritage Aberdeen, U1105/6, col Heather, £49.95 m; (over door) Arncliffe, U1441/E05, col Mystic Topaz, £49.95 m, both Moon. (In wardrobe) Cotswold **throw,** col Damson Stripe, £110, Neptune. Linea cable-knit **throw,** £80, House of Fraser. Linen **pillowcases,** col Cassis Rose, £37.50 each; **duvet cover,** col Parisian Blue, £170, all The Linen Works. **Cushions** (from top): **1** Tweed, col Fuchsia, £12.99, Dunelm. **2** Heather Check fringe, £49.95, Bronte by Moon. **3** Geometric Pod, £35, Murmur. **4** Oban, £15.99, Homebase. (Over door) Eco Deco silk/wool **scarf,** £45, Jane Eastwood. **Wallpaper,** Oakwood DOPNOA201, col Black, £44 a roll, Sanderson. (Just seen) Misty Moors velvet **bedspread,** £49.99, Dunelm.

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BASK IN THE GLOW

Wall, painted in Juniper, £34 for 2.5L matt emulsion, Neptune. **Curtain,** Arncliffe, U1441/B03, col Charoite, £49.95 m, Moon. Black Ercol **chair,** similar from Florrie & Bill. **Cushion,** Oakwood, DOPNOA203, £44 m, Sanderson. **Peg rail,** similar from Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. Supreme **towels,** from £20 for hand towel, Christy. **Linen bag,** Archie, col Mulberry, £40 m, Voyage. Marseille Cyprium copper bateau **bath,** £2,495, The Cast Iron Bath Company. **Shelf,** similar from Dee Puddy Home & Vintage. (On shelf) Linea Forest Check **jug,** £20, House of Fraser. Black Willow **plate,** £15, Burleigh. Blush Pink **plate,** £13, Murmur. Lucy Darkest **cup** (just seen), £12, Toast. **Toothbrushes,** similar from John Lewis. Reclaimed **flooring,** UFW1544, £27.99 sq m, Quick-Step. Shaggy **rug,** £50, Tesco. (On floor) Plum Asiatic Pheasant **jug,** £27, Burleigh. Darkest Brown salad **bowl,** £22.50, Toast. **Soaps,** £2.50 each; similar **sponge,** all Re.

FEATURE SARA BIRD **STYLING** SALLY DENNING **STYLING ASSISTANT** NIKKI BRADLEY **PHOTOGRAPHS** MARK SCOTT

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Spirit OF THE NIGHT

GET IN THE MOOD FOR BONFIRE NIGHT PARTIES WITH THE LATEST AROUND-THE-FIRE-ENTERTAINING BUYS

Draw up a chair and watch the flames



We love the look of a rusted firepit taking centre stage in the garden, surrounded by outdoor chairs layered with chunky knitted textures to snuggle up in. Use scented fire-starters to create a wonderful aroma in the night-time air.

Rusty **brazier,** £80, Cox & Cox. Islay lounging **armchair,** £250; Islay outdoor **sofa,** £399, both John Lewis. (On armchair) Multiblock **cushion,** col Mustard Yellow, £49.95; Multiblock **throw,** col Grey/Multi, £89.95, both Bronte by Moon. Rustic side **table,** £29.99, HomeSense. (On table) Miner's **lantern,** £10, Garden Trading. Red enamel **mug,** £4, Hedgehog Round the World. (Beside table) Mörkt **lantern,** £14, Ikea. Large pumpkin **candle,** £49.95, Nordic House. (On sofa) Adeen red wool and cotton **cushion,** £40; Etto **throw,** col Grey/Orange, £60, both Habitat. Multiblock **cushion,** col Beige/Multi, £49.95, Bronte by Moon. Rustic reclaimed wood **bench,** £99, Nordic House. (On bench) Miner's **lantern,** £10, Garden Trading. Kintyre check **throw,** col Charcoal, £95, Ian Mankin. Adeen red wool and silk **throw,** £80, Habitat. (Beside bench) Cornbury **votives,** £8.50 each, Garden Trading.



1 Get your fire going and add fragrance with cinnamon-scented fire starters. Natural pine cone firelighters, £12.95 for 12, Dee Puddy.
2 Throw a sheepskin over chairs for guests to sink into. Grey short-haired curly sheepskin, £165, Cox & Cox.
3 Wrap a soft wool throw around your shoulders as the night draws in. Zigzag weave throw, col Burnt Orange, £29, John Lewis.
4 Keep chills out with a warm wool blanket. Wool check blanket, col Brown/White, £95, Hedgehog.
5 Avoid getting your fingers burnt by choosing super-long matches. Very Long Matches, £11.50, Graham and Green.
6 Toast your favourite treats a safe distance from the fire. Extending wire toasting fork, £10.50; wire toasting fork, £10.50, both Re.
7 Decorate your outdoor table with colourful leaves. Orange faux maple leaves, £1.75 each, Norpar Barns.
8 Keep your hands toasty as the temperature drops. Panel sheepskin mittens, £40, Celtic & Co.
9 Ignite the fire in no time with natural wood fire starters. Certainly Wood Firestarter Flamers, £3.49 for 24, Philip Morris and Son.
10 Eat, drink and enjoy the party – and still keep your hands warm. Cashmere wrist warmers, col Winter White, £32, Celtic & Co.
11 Add to the fire for fragrant flames. Bundle of liquorice roots, £1.50, Hedgehog.
12 Stay warm in style all evening long. Fair Isle scarf, £32, Celtic & Co.
13 Serve soup or warming hot chocolate in jolly mugs. Red enamel mug, £4, Hedgehog.
14 Create a pretty night-time glow with portable lanterns. Miner's Lantern in Clay, £10, Garden Trading. »



Dig into a fresh-air feast

Create an outdoor food area with a trestle-style buffet table placed near a barbecue. Have serving platters, mugs and plates at the ready for when the bonfire bangers have sizzled to perfection and display a blackboard sign to welcome guests.

Deluxe Party rectangle steel charcoal **barbecue,** 345/1113, £49.99, Argos. (On barbecue) Hearts **tea towel,** £10, Caroline Gardner. Three-piece **barbecue tool set,** £35, John Lewis. Panda **bamboo utensils,** £6 for 4, Habitat. Terracotta **stew pot,** 1.5L, £15.99, Cookware Essentials at Wayfair. Rebu **bamboo bowls,** col Mulberry, £14.99 for 2, Argos. Ruffin **table,** £895, Graham and Green. Copper **mugs,** £18 each; Pemble Cartouche **platter,** £24, both Rowen & Wren. Hearts **mugs,** £10.95 each; Hearts **melamine plates,** £23.50 for 4, all Caroline Gardner. Vero **cutlery,** cols Red and Dandelion, from £2 for a teaspoon, John Lewis. Enamel **milk jugs,** cols Clay and Red, from £16 each; Large **stopper bottles,** £8.50 each, all Labour and Wait. Diod **glasses,** col Green, £2.25 each; Glansig **tealight holder,** col Yellow, £1.25, all Ikea. Wire **basket,** £25, Cox & Cox. Gingham **cocktail napkins,** £3 for 20, Hedgehog. (Hanging from pergola) **Tealight lanterns,** col Warm Red, £11.95 each, Orla Kiely at Wild & Wolf. Glass **tealight hurricane,** cols Smoke Grey and Clear, £9 each, Nordic House. Framed **blackboard,** £65, Graham and Green.



1 Offer guests a cosy blanket. Fringed throw, £19.99, HomeSense.
2 Drape a throw over your knees. Fringed linen throw, col Pale Grey, £110, The Linen Works.
3 Serve winter salads. Stockholm wooden salad servers, £9 for a 2-piece set, Ikea.
4 Wipe sticky fingers. Gingham cocktail napkins, £3 for 20, Hedgehog.
5 Pop a compact corkscrew into your pocket. Sommelier corkscrew, £22, Labour and Wait.
6 Present food on simple plates. Bamboo plates, £8.50 for 8, Hedgehog.
7 Transport soft drinks in vintage bottles. Hemsmak stoppered bottle, £2, Ikea.
8 Fill glass tumblers with soft drinks. Diod glasses, col Green, £2.25 each, Ikea.
9 Keep a tea towel close to hand. Daisy tea towel, £10, Caroline Gardner.
10 Arrange treats on colourful plates. Pols Porcelain Potten plate, cols Red and Orange, £7 each, John Lewis.
11 Use mini bamboo skewers to spear olives. Hansi bamboo picks, £6 for 40, Rowen & Wren.
12 Brighten up with colourful cutlery. Vero cutlery, cols Red and Dandelion, from £2 for a teaspoon, John Lewis.
13 Introduce a retro camping feel. Enamel pasta plate, £4, Hedgehog.
14 Choose robust enamel bowls for serving food outdoors. Enamel pudding basin, £4, Hedgehog.
15 Add to the party atmosphere. Red stripy paper straws, £8.50 for 144, Hedgehog.
16 Avoid spills with straws and lidded jam jars for drinks. Red wide-stripe straws (with Vintage Mason jar, not shown), £4.95 for jar and straw, Graham and Green.
17 Hand out snacks on a platter. Pemble Cartouche platter, £24, Rowen & Wren. »



Light up the night

Fill your outside space with atmospheric lighting. Try draping fairy lights over tree branches, dotting tables with tealights and using easy-to-carry lanterns for illumination just where you need it.

Rustic reclaimed **wooden bench,** £99, Nordic House. (On bench) Bracka chocolate fudge **scented candles,** £3.50 for 3, Ikea. Kestle **zinc plate,** £38 for 4, Rowen & Wren. Rusty House **tealight lanterns,** £17.50 each, Cox & Cox. Large Stornoway **lantern,** col Charcoal, £30, Garden Trading. (In background) **Tealight stakes,** £29.95 each, Dee Puddy. Outdoor battery **garland,** £5, Habitat.

NEXT MONTH CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS



1 Snuggle up against the autumn chills. Etto throw, col Grey/Orange, £60, Habitat.
2 Display lanterns on a robust tray. Zinc tray, part of zinc tray table, 55556, £80, Nordic House.
3 Use large storm lanterns to stop your candles being blown out in a breeze. Large Stornoway lantern, CYCO01, col Charcoal, £30, Garden Trading.
4 Add a sweet note to your evening. Vift scented block candle, £4, Ikea.
5 Light up the night with a pillar candle. Unscented block candles, £1.50 each, Ikea.
6 Perfume the air. Fudge-scented candles in three different colours, £3.50 for 3, Ikea.
7 Stow extra-long matches in a metal container. Long matches in holder, £8, Re.
8 Give your table a seasonal feel. Orange faux maple leaves, £1.75 each; gourds (on throw), from £2.50 each, all Norpar Barns.
9 Decorate with a dash of colour. Orange cushion cover, £78, Suki Cheema.
10 Choose tealight holders with pretty details. Birdcage tealight holder, £4.25, Graham and Green.
11 Enjoy the warmth of reflective copper. Triangular copper lantern, £22, Graham and Green.
12 Produce a gentle amber glow. Glansig tealight holder, col Yellow, £1.25, Ikea.
13 Create a focal point on your party table. Mini Mae brass candelabra, £22; mini candles, £8 for 20, both Rowen & Wren.
14 Bring some sparkle to low-hanging branches with little lanterns. Zinc tealight lantern, £5, The White Company.

STYLIST SALLY CONRAN **STYLING ASSISTANTS** CELIA CAMPBELL AND JESS OSBORNE **PHOTOGRAPHS** TIM YOUNG
NB NEVER LEAVE A BURNING CANDLE OR FIRE UNATTENDED

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The country decorator

EXPOSED WALLS

LET THE NATURAL CHARACTER OF BRICK AND STONE SHINE THROUGH ON FEATURE WALLS, ARCHES AND FIREPLACES

1 If you have an unusual shaped window or arched doorway, it's possible the bricks around it have been laid vertically for structural reasons and worth checking with a builder whether you could expose them to show off an individual architectural feature.



Whitewashed walls are the ideal backdrop for colourful fabrics and accessories.

2



A woodburning stove and tiled hearth give a brick fire surround an inviting look.

3

2 PAINT IT WHITE

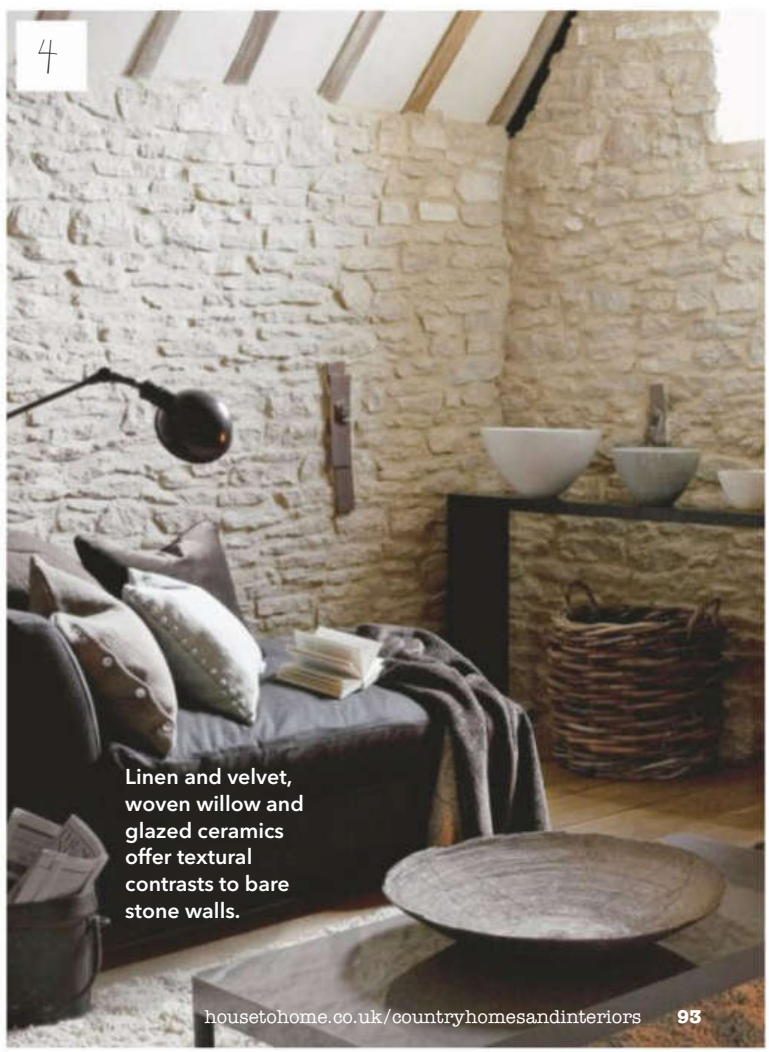
Whitewashed brickwork looks very stylish in a modern country home. It has practical benefits, too, as paint has an insulating effect, so it's a great way of reducing heat loss while retaining the texture of the brick. If you're doing the painting yourself, Cathryn Helsby, Marketing Manager, Earthborn, suggests 'cleaning the bricks very thoroughly using soapy water and a stiff brush before applying a coat of eco-friendly Claypaint'.

3 WARM UP A FIREPLACE

Functional and characterful, a bare brick chimney breast is key to country style, but also enhances the heat effect of the fire. Exposed brick with its pinky brown tones suggests natural warmth and complements the cosiness radiating from the fireplace itself. A few accessories such as oversized ceramic pots and an enamel firewood bucket bring extra interest to this welcoming spot.

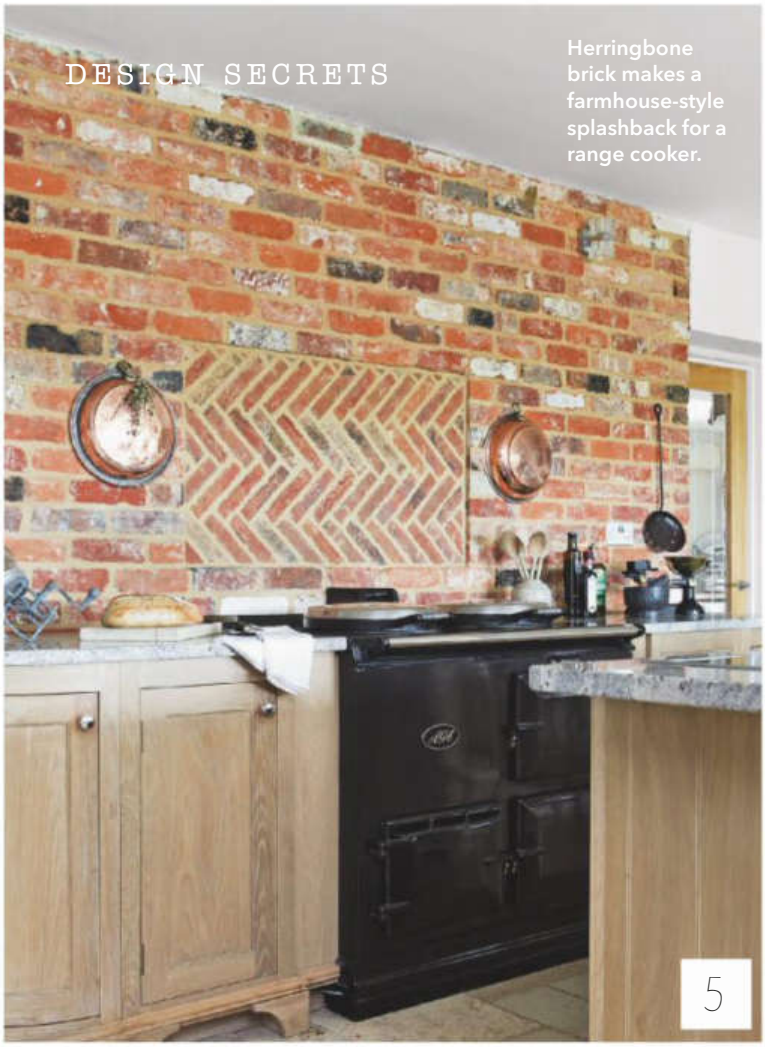
4 UNCOVER STONE WALLS

Stone was a commonly used building material for country dwellings. Exposing it internally in its entirety will create a stunning heritage feel and provide an earthy, texture-rich alternative to a wall covering. Add fabrics and furniture in muted shades and contrasting textures to create a comfortable rustic look in a living room. »



4

Linen and velvet, woven willow and glazed ceramics offer textural contrasts to bare stone walls.



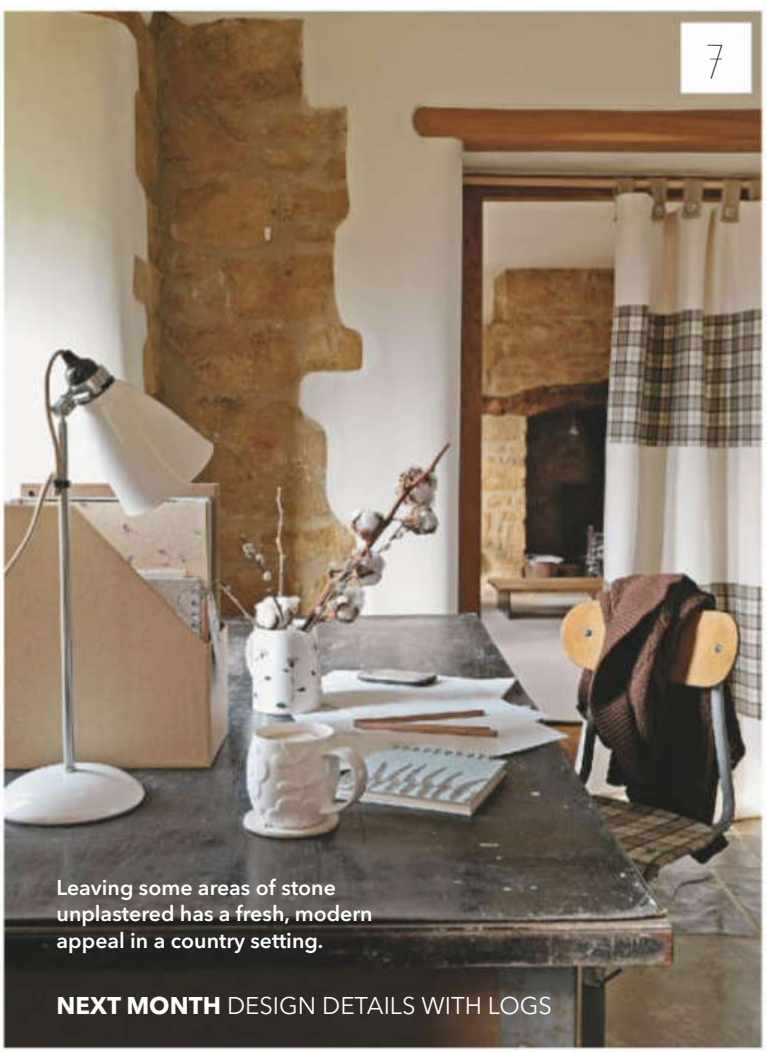
Herringbone brick makes a farmhouse-style splashback for a range cooker.

5



Brick combined with reclaimed wood gives a cottage bathroom a touch of industrial chic.

6



7

Leaving some areas of stone unplastered has a fresh, modern appeal in a country setting.

NEXT MONTH DESIGN DETAILS WITH LOGS

5 CREATE A FOCAL POINT

Give an exposed brick wall in a newly built kitchen extension a stunning feature by building in a herringbone brick splashback. To introduce historic charm, Mark Hassall from Authentic Reclamation recommends 'sourcing original handmade bricks as there is no modern equivalent of a brick that was made by hand over a century ago'.

6 BARE A BATHROOM WALL

Not just the reserve of living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms, exposed brickwork can also make a strong design statement in the smallest of interior spaces. Add a rough luxe style to a cottage bathroom with reclaimed wood units, white sanitaryware, decorative floor tiles and bathroom accessories in shiny metal against a fully exposed brick wall.

7 USE STONE AS A CONTRAST

Exposing patches of stonework creates a subtle visual 'trim' to a light-enhancing painted plaster wall – ideal if you don't want a whole wall of bare stone. Charlotte Cosby, Head of Creative, Farrow & Ball advises, 'Red-based neutral paint shades complement exposed stonework beautifully. Try Dimity, Joa's White and Oxford Stone for teaming with natural materials, including stonework.'

FEATURE SARA EMSLIE **PHOTOGRAPHS** TIMEINCUKCONTENT.COM

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Modern country makes

WOODLAND WONDERS

BRING A NATURAL TOUCH TO YOUR HOME WITH SIMPLE PROJECTS CREATED FROM SEASONAL FINDS



Acorn and leaf napkin ties

Style tip

Use other leaves at different times of the year. Spruce and berries give a festive touch, and blossom, a spring feel.

Ribbon leaf garland



Style tip

Add mini pumpkins by piercing them with a bodkin threaded with twine, then tie to the bunches. »



Style tip

A bottle-shaped vase will hold the branch shapes closer together.

Forager's arrangement

Glowing tealight lanterns



Style tip

Display glass lanterns in a group with scattered acorns, seeds or berries for a natural look. »

VIDEO
Watch our 'Modern Country Makes' videos at **country-days.co.uk**

How to MAKE THEM YOURSELF

Acorn and leaf napkin ties

Seasonal foliage looks fabulous when fashioned into buttonholes with a rustic ribbon. Begin with the acorns, and twist or use a hot glue gun to affix some strong florist wire at the base to act as the stalk. Choose leaves with longer stalks or stems and group together in a flat fan shape, then place a couple of the acorns on top. Holding all the stems and any wires together, twist a length of raffia around the stems from top to bottom, tying the ends together at the base. Lay on top of a folded napkin, then tie a ribbon around both. Alternatively, attach a long length of raffia to the shaft of the buttonhole and tie this directly to the napkin.



Faux leaves and acorns, Norpar Barns. **Ribbon,** Jane Means. **Plates,** from £12.95; brass **pot,** £9.95; **scissors,** £12.95; **bowl,** £14.95, all Nkuku. **Candle,** £4.10, St Eval Candle Company. **Jug,** £12.99, AnJo. **Napkins,** £13.50 each; **scarves** (on chair), £32.50 each, The Linen Works. Café **chair,** £200 a pair, Cox & Cox.

Ribbon leaf garland

Bring a warm, autumnal touch to any room in your house by displaying strings of leaves, berries and seed pods. Start by gathering together groups of your favourite seasonal offerings, such as foliage, berries and Chinese lantern seedpods in a variety of colours. Tie them all tightly together with either a length of decorative ribbon or some garden twine, leaving the ends long. Repeat this process until you have made several bunches. Tie the bunches along the length of a piece of ribbon so that they are staggered at various intervals, then drape them attractively around the mantelpiece, mirrors, picture frames or wooden pegs.



Faux leaves, berries, Chinese lanterns and mini pumpkins, from a selection, Norpar Barns. **Decorative ribbon,** from a selection, Jane Means. **Twine,** available from garden centres.

Forager's arrangement

Branches, berries, nuts and mini pumpkins make a colourful combination in this pretty display. Assemble the natural decorations first. Thread the pumpkins with a loop of twine using a strong bodkin or tapestry needle, then knot underneath. Tie a loop of ribbon around walnut shells – leave ends long for tying to the branches. Assemble the arrangement by filling a vase half full with mini pumpkins and poppy seed heads. Insert the willow and berry branches, then drape with miniature fairy lights. Hang up the prepared walnuts and pumpkin decorations. Place on a tray, then scatter leaves, berries, more walnuts and pumpkins, and even the odd mushroom around the base for decoration.



Seasonal decorations, from a selection, Norpar Barns. **Willow and hypericum branches,** from florists. **Ribbon,** from a selection, Jane Means. Copper wire **lights,** £9.95, Rigby & Mac. **Tray table,** £90, Cox & Cox. **Vase,** similar from John Lewis. **Frame,** similar from The French House. **Lantern,** similar from Nordic House.

Glowing tealight lanterns

Autumn leaves display a beautiful translucent quality, revealing their structure and delicacy, when lit from behind, which makes them ideal for decorating candle jars. Collect glass pots or jars, and thoroughly clean and dry them. Select different-sized leaves and, using a découpage glue such as Mod Podge, dab a small blob on the outer edges of the leaf, then glue onto the jar for a textural 3D finish. For a flat look, glue all over the underside and brush over the top side of the leaf. Repeat around the jar circumference, then allow to dry. Decorate the jar tops with a length of ribbon fixed with a blob of glue, or a raffia bow tied around the rim. Pour some water into the jar, then pop in a floating candle.



Ribbon, raffia and candles, from a selection, D Byford & Sons, or available from all good craft shops. Mod Podge Matte **glue,** £4 for 236ml, Hobbycraft.

FEATURE SARA BIRD **STYLING ASSISTANT** ROSY JOHNSON **PHOTOGRAPHS** DAN DUCHARS

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NEXT MONTH BESPOKE GIFTS

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‘I WANTED MORE SPACE AND TO FEEL MORE CONNECTED WITH NATURE’

Smallholder and pig farmer Sam Gray

After a high-pressure job in sales, Sam Gray gave up the company car and high heels six years ago for a change of lifestyle on a 32-acre smallholding in the village of Betchcott in the Shropshire hills. Middle Farm has it all; situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with buzzards circling overhead and sheep grazing, it’s a rural paradise for Sam and her children Maddie, nine, and Connor, seven. There are also the British Lop pigs that Sam breeds, six rare Soay sheep and the chickens. Autumn is Sam’s favourite time of year, so we went to meet her on the farm to find out more…

TELL US ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE… Tucked away on the north-east slopes of the Long Mynd with breathtaking views of the surrounding hills, a farm has stood on this site for 600 years. Enormous medieval cruck frames hold the centre of our old farmhouse together, and a hotchpotch of add-ons throughout the centuries combines to create an enchanting building. I love the oak beams and the huge inglenook fireplace that keeps everyone warm during autumn and winter. The initial house and cottage renovations (the house came with a Dutch barn, stone byre, old granary building, plus cottages) took the best part of 18 months and, at one point, we had six skips in the middle of the yard. But it was worth it in the end – I’ve always been passionate about creating a welcoming environment.

IS IT YOUR DREAM HOME? Yes – it doesn’t get better than this. High on a hill, it’s one of the few places in the UK where you have to stop on the lane to let wild ponies cross. We have a private fishing lake (our first winter here actually saw us ice skating on it) and enough woodland not only to keep us in firewood for life, but also to provide a home for badgers, foxes, birds of prey and all sorts of creepy crawlies.

DID YOU GROW UP IN THE COUNTRY? I enjoyed my childhood as a proper outdoor-type growing up in a village near St Albans. I remember exploring the meadowlands for miles around, building camps and damming streams, and in autumn picking blackberries on the old railway line. I am perfectly suited to a rustic way of life.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU MOST ABOUT HOW YOU LIVE? The space is all encompassing. For me, it’s about absorbing the sights, sounds and smells that »





















I couldn't live without...

'WELLIES (IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING!), MY WOOLLY HATS AND MY PENKNIFE. IT WAS GIVEN TO ME IN EXCHANGE FOR A PENNY, AN OLD COUNTRY TRADITION, BY MY FAVOURITE GAMEKEEPER'







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FEATURE SARAH WILSON PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD HAMMERTON

Shropshire has to offer. Everything slows down, and the peace and solitude are relaxing and calming. There are many moments here that catch me with sheer happiness – the first birdsong of spring, lichen growing in abundance. By noticing the stars at night, the absence of traffic and the beauty of the countryside, I am sure never to take my surroundings for granted. If you like your own company, it's the perfect place to be.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE SHOPS LOCALLY? We are four miles from Church Stretton. Van Doesburg's is a deli there where you can buy superb homemade pies, casseroles, desserts and cakes. Stretton Antiques Market is a four-storey treasure trove where I have found many delightful things for the house. And, of course, the Ludlow Food Centre, about 25 minutes away, is packed with wonderful local produce, much of which is showcased at the Ludlow Food Festival, held in September.

WHAT DO YOU GET FROM YOUR SMALLHOLDING LIFESTYLE? Smallholding means different things to different people. For some, it may be a couple of acres of land and a greenhouse; for others, tens of acres and the full works – chickens, pigs, goats, growing their own… I've found that it's better to do a few things really well and develop slowly so that you can learn and manage as you go along. As with any business, there has to be a source of income large enough to sustain the smallholding and the people living on it. It may not be considered typical for a smallholder but running guest accommodation often means you can afford this type of lifestyle. Also, I know from experience that sales and marketing are crucial to survival, even when living 'the good life'. New ideas are key, too – they make smallholding fun and diverse, and keep you on your toes. I find it a great privilege, albeit hard work, to spend my days in this way.

IT'S SUNDAY LUNCHTIME – WHERE DO YOU GO FOR A DRINK? I head half a mile down the road to The Bottle & Glass, an independent 17th-century country pub that serves proper homecooked food that's locally sourced. I love going there for a roast lunch with a nice glass of Merlot.

WHAT ARE THE HOT RURAL TOPICS LOCALLY? Like so many other areas in the British countryside, slow broadband is a constant annoyance.

WHAT'S GROWING IN YOUR KITCHEN GARDEN RIGHT NOW? We are high up here, so our seasons tend to be quite late in coming. My favourite autumn vegetables are squashes, particularly butternut, which I like to serve roasted in a salad with spinach, goat's cheese and walnuts. We are also picking apples and plums at the moment and putting them into storage.

IT'S TIME TO RELAX – TELL US ABOUT YOUR PERFECT WEEKEND… Running a smallholding is so diverse that no two days are the same and there is no 'weekend' as such. The only difference is that the kids are home from school. This lifestyle comes with responsibilities, especially where animals are concerned, so their welfare comes first. Weekends away just don't happen but I find it a privilege to spend my days in this way, so I don't mind.

☎ *Doing It In Wellies* by Sam Gray (£18, middlefarmpress.com) documents Sam's life as a smallholder. For more information on Middle Farm, visit middlefarmcottages.co.uk or call 01694 751232.

SAM'S COUNTRY VIBE

Favourite thing about autumn… The colours of the leaves.
Do you celebrate Halloween? No, we live so remotely there wouldn't be much point. Plus, it's American!
Do you eat game? Yes, I love it, especially rabbit.
If you could choose one seasonal pudding… Apple and blackberry crumble with crushed walnuts added to the topping.
When the clocks go back, what will you be doing? Still feeding the pigs (just a bit earlier in the day).

It's all about comfort and colour

WARM UP YOUR HOME WITH LAURA ASHLEY'S AMBLESIDE RANGE OF HOME FURNISHINGS AND COOK'S KITCHEN ACCESSORIES

At this time of year, it's a pleasure to start preparing your country home for winter, enjoying cosy nights with family and friends and thinking ahead to Christmas festivities. It feels good to know the house is ready for visitors, and the classic country looks of Laura Ashley's new Ambleside interiors range make that easy. With rich prints and beautiful patterns in tones of Cranberry, Hedgerow and Grape, plus charming lighting and comfortable accessories, Ambleside embodies the classic, relaxed feel that is associated with the Laura Ashley name. Complementing the country style of Ambleside, the new Cook's Kitchen collection of oven-to-table ware and essential home accessories will make sure it's a treat to spend time in the kitchen. For everyone who loves to cook, from serious foodies to budding pastry chefs, Cook's Kitchen pieces are a joy to use thanks to their high-quality finish and good looks. And, when your guests arrive, even if it's just for a meal around the kitchen table, pretty pie dishes and platters plus a jolly Red Tomato casserole dish for the centre of the table ensure perfect presentation.



Wisteria Cranberry Floral **wallpaper**, £40 a roll; Dorset **chairs**, £475 for 2; Dorset **wall cupboard**, £550; Corbridge **lanterns**, £90 each, all Laura Ashley.



1 Display favourite pieces. Dorset wall cupboard, col White, £550. **2 Make drying up fun with rustic patterns.** Fruit and veg tea towels, £12 for 2. **3 Crush and grind well to get the perfect paste.** Marble pestle and mortar, £32. **4 Brighten up a plain sofa.** Wisteria cushion, £45. **5 Create delicious, warming meals.** Tomato stoneware casserole dish, £55. **6 Provide an inviting ambience for entertaining.** Kirkby rise-and-fall pendant, £125. **7 Cosy up with colourful textures.** Stirling throw, £100.

For more information about Laura Ashley's new Ambleside interior range and the Cook's Kitchen collection of bakeware, oven-to-table ware and kitchen accessories, visit the website at lauraashley.com.

LAURA ASHLEY



Hydrangea Cranberry Floral **wallpaper,** £40 a roll; Dorset Hedgerow **chest of drawers,** £1,150; **chair,** as before; **cushions,** Cranbourne Check, £45, Peony Tapestry, £40, all Laura Ashley.

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Page 110
The new looks for country kitchens

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Curl up on this season's sofa

Page 120
Choose the right tumble dryer »

The latest looks for modern country kitchens

FEATURING ON-TREND FINISHES, PARED-BACK DETAILING AND THIS SEASON'S HOTTEST HUES, THE LATEST DESIGNS ARE FASHION-FORWARD AND FILLED WITH PERSONALITY AND STYLE



1 Welcome to charcoal

Pale grey may be today's go-to neutral in country home decor, but off-black is where it's at if you want a kitchen that packs a punch. This Neptune kitchen is painted in the darkest charcoal, providing a relaxed monochrome scheme. A flat paint finish will produce a softer look than one with sheen, but do check for fingerprint resistance as darker colours are well known to show every mark. Keeping the walls and ceiling pale will ensure the largest surface area is still the lightest.

Suffolk **kitchen,** from £11,000, Neptune.



Bespoke **kitchens,** from £45,000, Podesta.

2 Freestanding statements

In response to the demand for a less formal feel, Podesta has developed a style called Fitted Freestanding. 'It features bespoke freestanding pieces designed to fit perfectly in a specific space,' says Director, Matt Podesta. 'Combining materials or finishes, like this baby blue paint and English oak, helps break up large expanses of cabinetry for a more relaxed look.'



Kitchens, from £7,000, British Standard.

3 A brighter shade

Bright colours are all over the catwalks this season so it's no surprise to see bold shades, such as this peppy mustard yellow, filtering into the interiors world. Country kitchens can enjoy a slice of the action without being overpowered, by keeping the bright colour below eye level and pairing with 'antiqued' whites – try Old or Shaded White by Farrow & Ball – that soften the impact.

4 Metal works

Proof positive that the trend for metallic finishes works in a country setting, this fabulous handmade copper sink looks stunning against cabinets painted in the inky hues of Mylands' Bond Street. 'The sink's hand-beaten surface is not only antimicrobial but also extremely tactile, just right for creating a standout focal point,' says Middleton Bespoke's Design Director, Jasper Middleton. 'Add polished brass knobs to your kitchen cabinets to enhance the metallic impact.' »



Bespoke **kitchens,** from £25,000, Middleton Bespoke.

Tip Don't be afraid to embrace a modern aesthetic in period or rural properties. Some of the most successful kitchen designs pair old and new with striking results.



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5 Larder love

A modern take on the traditional pantry store, a dedicated larder unit is an established kitchen essential. Storing your dried and tinned goods in one place so they're all accessible and easy to see speeds up the process of gathering ingredients before cooking. 'Larders are also being celebrated for their design impact,' says Kiran Noonan, Sales Director at John Lewis of Hungerford. 'People feel more comfortable experimenting with bold colour on a stand-alone piece, like a larder, which can be incredibly effective.'



Shaker **kitchen,** from £25,000, John Lewis of Hungerford.

Country best STORAGE IDEAS



BASKETS TO HAND
This three-tier basket trolley, is easy to move around.
• **Risatorp trolley, col White, £50, Ikea.**



TAKING SHAPE
An industrial-looking trolley with an ergonomic oval design.
• **Industrial storage trolley, £99, Nordic House.**



A FRENCH AFFAIR
For traditional French-farmhouse charm, try wooden crates on a frame.
• **Crate rack, £420, Smithers of Stamford.** »



Handpainted **kitchen,** from £18,000, Rencraft.

6 Tradition with a twist

Classic kitchens will always be in high demand, but even such a solid design requires subtle updates to keep it fresh and interesting. 'A classic painted kitchen is absolutely timeless and that's what makes it such a popular choice,' says John Stephens, Director of Rencraft. 'The secret is in the detail. Turned end columns, in-frame doors and two-tier plate racks add character and variety.'



The Sebastian Cox **kitchen,** from £11,000, Devol.

7 Natural state

Rustic finishes are enjoying a style revival, helping to bring wooden cabinetry back into favour. 'The rustic country look is top of the cool charts,' says Devol's Creative Director, Helen Parker, 'and it's all about beautiful handmade cabinets in stylish but simple designs. What makes rustic surfaces so appealing is that they don't have a mass-produced look. Timber in its most natural state can create beautiful furniture.'

8 Shelf life

Put it down to the recession or environmental concerns, but there's been a noticeable surge in pared-down, simple design that is functional and unfussy over the last few years. Open shelving in lieu of wall cupboards is part of this trend. With more than a hint of the utilitarian Victorian pantry, this look shakes up the traditional base and wall cupboard combo without compromising your kitchen's storage capacity. Open shelves are less dense than solid cabinets, so will also work as an effective space-enhancing tool in rooms that have low ceilings or limited natural light.



Bespoke **kitchens,** from £45,000, Artichoke.

Country style need-to-know

- **CHOOSE THE BEST TIME TO BUY** Just like fashion, kitchen trends tend to be seasonal. The latest colour forecasts are usually announced in spring and autumn, so that's the perfect time to check out the hottest hues for everything from furniture finishes to tiles and accessories.
- **KEEP IT COUNTRY** Look out for ideas that will work in harmony with the rest of your home. Anything featuring rustic materials or artisan craftsmanship, or having an organic shape will prove to be a more natural fit in a rural setting.
- **ADD YOUR OWN TWIST** Country kitchens are all about character and personality. This can be as simple as having an eye-catching splashback or painting an island unit or butcher's block in a bolder shade than the rest of your cabinetry.

FEATURE LINDA CLAYTON **PHOTOGRAPH** (OPENER/TUMBLE DRYER) TIMEINCUKCONTENT.COM

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Sink into this season's stylish sofas

IN SHOW-OFF SHAPES AND DRESSED IN LAID-BACK FABRICS, THE LATEST COUNTRY SOFAS ARE UPPING THE COMFORT LEVELS, LOOKING BETTER THAN EVER AND CRYING OUT TO BE CURLED UP ON



1 Pretty in pink

'My top tip when choosing a country sofa is to ask yourself: Will I still like it in five years' time? Is it well made? And will it be really, really comfy?' says Charlie Marshall, Founder, Loaf. 'Our Crumpet design is slightly deeper than most sofas so it's super-comfortable and the warm red hue gives an instantly cosy feel, while the herringbone weave adds texture and interest.'

Large **Crumpet sofa** in Herringbone, col Tea Rose, H82xW221x D102cm, £1,555, Loaf.



Medium **Grassington sofa** in Spring Rhythm, col Lotus Reverse Blue, H85xW160xD85cm, £1,470, Sofas & Stuff.

2 Prints charming

'A pair of these small, pretty sofas would look great sitting opposite each other on either side of a fireplace,' says Andrew Cussins, Managing Director, Sofas & Stuff. 'The hand-blocked Indian cotton print suits the simplicity of the fixed seat and back. And, although this can create a very chic look, the hand-blocked pattern also works well in a country farmhouse setting, bringing a breath of fresh air to even the most traditional interior.'



Calmsden sofa with Rounded Legs in Tweed, col Sea 116, H88xW160xD90cm, £1,827, Vanessa Arbuthnott.

3 Islands and highlands

'By combining expert craftsmanship with hardwearing, beautiful Harris Tweed, this sofa typifies the sense of heritage and tradition that make Britain great,' says Vanessa Arbuthnott of her company's super sofa, made in the UK. 'The tweeds are specially woven for us and the colours (Sky, Bracken, Peat and Sea) echo the landscape on the remote Scottish island where they're made.'

4 Button up

'There's nothing quite as luxurious as a button-back sofa or armchair,' says Emma Williams, Head of Buying and Merchandising, Sofa.com. 'Its effortless style is perfectly suited to the interior of a country home, while the button detailing will add character to the look and feel of the sofa. You could customise it by choosing a designer fabric, changing the style of the legs, adding piping or even opting for buttons in a contrasting colour.' »



Two-seater **Bingley sofa** in Herringbone, col Pigeon, H91x W154xD90cm, £1,030, Sofa.com

Tip For flexible lounging in larger living rooms, consider a modular sofa that comes in individual sections that you can rearrange in shapes to suit your lifestyle and the amount of space in your room.



Three-seater **Collins sofa,** col Tan, H81x W188xD93cm, £1,899, Gray & Willow at House of Fraser.

4 Loveable leather

'A leather sofa has always been a country favourite. Choose a timeless, sophisticated design that's modern yet classic,' says Kate Thompson, Head of Buying, Homewares, House of Fraser. 'The semi-aniline type of leather used on this sofa is supple and hardwearing, great for everyday comfort in a country home. A top coat finish helps to protect against fading and staining.'



Four-seater **Stanza sofa,** col Silver, H90xW212x D97cm, £1,198, DFS.

5 Subtle Scandi style

'A sofa in a simple shape and calming colour sets the scene for a country living room. 'This clean-lined, contemporary sofa is perfect for introducing an on-trend Scandinavian look,' says Helen Leigh-Jones, Designer, DFS. 'The sofa frame, hand-crafted in our Derbyshire factory, is covered in super-soft off-white cord and the neat arms and chrome legs give it a sleek finish.'

6 Corner piece

'Corner sofas are ideal for maximising seating space without compromising comfort or style,' says Unna Patel, Upholstery Buyer, John Lewis. 'If you are limited on space, consider one with a low back and compact arms to prevent the room feeling crowded. If space is not an issue, opt for a larger corner unit that can be positioned in the centre of a room, creating a focal point.'



Medium corner chaise-end **Loki sofa** in Arden, col Sable, H85xW256xD207cm, £3,700, John Lewis.

Country style need-to-know

- **CONSIDER DIFFERENT STYLES** Join the trend for Mid-Century modern style, as typified by sofas with lean frames, low backs and legs on show. The pared-back style and absence of bulk suit modern country homes and smaller spaces. Vintage versions get a new lease of life when re-covered in contemporary fabrics, or try Ercol for an Originals studio couch, as well as a range of new designs.
- **DON'T BE LURED BY LOOKS ALONE** Although it's good to chill out on relaxing feather-filled cushions, they need plumping every day to keep the sofa looking crisp and inviting. Alternatives are foam for firmness or combinations of foam, fibre and feathers with varying degrees of softness. Your back will thank you for choosing a smart tailored sofa with a firm sprung back.
- **MAP OUT THE SOFA SHAPE** Before you buy your sofa, tape sheets of newspaper together to the correct size and lay it on the floor to check that it won't disrupt the pathways across the room. Bear in mind that the actual sofa will have greater impact on the room than the paper shapes!

FEATURE CAROLINE RODRIGUES

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The best dryers for wet-weather days

MEET THE MACHINES THAT WILL DELIVER SOFT, FLUFFY CLOTHES THROUGHOUT THE COLDER MONTHS WITHOUT BLOWING YOUR ENERGY BILL



1

BEST FOR...
Ironing phobes
Hoover, A-40%, 9kg, £499
Boasting a fast-iron cycle – a short, heated, conditioning cycle that helps relax fabrics that may have become tangled or stiff – the DYC9913AX model (H85xW60xD60cm) takes the effort out of ironing. The innovative Aquavision in-door water reservoir makes it easy to see when collected condensed water needs emptying.



2

BEST FOR...
Open-plan kitchens
Gorenje, A++, 7kg, £499
With TwinAir heat-pump technology, the D76SY2B tumble dryer (H85xW60xD60cm) returns negligible condensation back into the room, making it the perfect appliance for those without a separate utility room. Its sleek jet-black finish and LED display panel will look smart, too, in a modern country scheme.



3

BEST FOR...
Low maintenance
Bosch, A++, 9kg, £899
Condenser dryers are a great option if you can't connect your machine to an external vent, but keeping the condenser reservoir clean can be a pretty tedious task. The WTY86791GB model (H84.2x W59.8xD63.4cm) avoids this thanks to its SelfCleaning system, which automatically cleans the condenser.



4

BEST FOR...
Speed
Whirlpool, A++, 10kg, £829.99
The 6th Sense technology in this HSCX 10443 condenser dryer (H84.5xW59.6xD65.9cm) gauges the level of moisture in each load and can then adapt to reduce energy use and drying time whenever possible. A patented SteamCare system can also be used to refresh garments that don't need a full wash.



5

BEST FOR...
Delicates
Miele, A++, 8kg, £899
The 11 drying programs, including Woollens and Silks Handcare, in this TKB 540 WP condenser tumble dryer (H85xW59.6xD63.6cm) offer great versatility. In addition, Miele's famous Honeycomb Plus drum is specially designed to cushion and protect garments, to ensure your most precious clothes are dried safely.

Country style need-to-know

- **COMPARE ENERGY RATINGS** Tumble drying is never going to be as eco-friendly as your washing line. However, energy ratings have improved massively over recent years. Models with an A-40%-rated heat-pump (which are 40% more energy efficient than an A-rated machine) offer the best energy savings.
- **SIZE MATTERS** The larger the drum, the better the air flow through the machine and the faster the drying time. If space is limited, think about a stackable model that can safely sit on top of your washing machine. Fully integrated designs and washer-dryers tend to have smaller drums.
- **DON'T FORGET** Vented models are cheaper than condenser dryers, but can be less convenient as they need to be installed near an external wall or window in order to discharge the hose. To reduce running costs, spin your washload at the highest speed possible and don't overload the dryer.

FEATURE LINDA CLAYTON

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My Country Business Awards
In association with British Wool

Meet the winners of the My Country Business Awards 2015

IN APRIL, WE LAUNCHED OUR SIXTH MY COUNTRY BUSINESS AWARDS, WHICH PROMOTE AND EMPOWER ENTREPRENEURIAL START UPS. HERE WE ANNOUNCE THE AMAZING PEOPLE WHO WON...

CATEGORY
Food

Sarah Hughes, Eat My Flowers

Sarah is married to Phillip, a farmer and estate manager, and has two sons, Thomas, 10, and William, nine. She works from the family farm in the Dee Valley, at the foot of the Berwyn Mountains in North Wales.

Sarah set up Eat My Flowers, which sells Great Taste award-winning crystallised flowers and lollipops with flowers in them, in 2011. 'I had been a business adviser to unemployed people investigating self-employment. When that contract finished, I looked at what business I could set up myself. I had a background in agriculture/horticulture and marketing, and had researched growing edible flowers for restaurants,' she says. 'I decided that crystallised flowers were a better idea. We grow all the flowers on our farm, and use no pesticides. We also grow apple and cherry trees for their blossom, violets and wild roses. The flowers are hand-processed within hours of picking, using pasteurised dried egg white and caster sugar to preserve them. They are then dried and packaged.



'Producing our crystallised flowers is a labour of love, but it is worth it. With our flowers you can see each petal and every detail. 'I was delighted to win an award. I also loved that the awards were sponsored by British Wool as it stands for all I believe in – British farming and rural businesses.'

Eat My Flowers, 01490 412039, eatmyflowers.co.uk.





WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

'Love the fact that Sarah grows the flowers herself'

'Great business story'

'Visually appealing'

'Edible flowers are trending right now'

CATEGORY

British Wool Award for Emerging Talent Using British Wool

Kharis Leggate, Home is an Island

Kharis lives in Lerwick, Shetland, and has a workshop at home where she creates textile designs. Having worked for seven years in social care, she wanted to do something creative. 'I couldn't ignore the creative urge any more!' she says.

Kharis's passion is hand-weaving designs in Shetland wool. 'I began weaving with it in September 2014 when I returned to Shetland College, where I graduated with a textile degree in June this year. For my degree show I made hand-woven cushions and blankets. At my show people asked about buying things, so I began the business with designs I'd done at college. As I'm just starting out, I also work part time – at Jamieson & Smith, a shop selling Shetland wool. I produce lengths of fabric in various designs that I then make into cushions. I have a small loom but hope to access funding to help pay for one similar to the one I used at college.

'I want my fabrics to convey a sense of place – an abandoned crofthouse, the remains of an old boat disintegrating on the shore, the way weather and time fade things made by people many years ago. Colour and texture are important in doing that. I also like to think of my fabrics in a home where they will be loved and well used.

'It was a surprise to win the British Wool category. I had held back from doing something creative, but now I realise I do have talent and it's so exciting.'

Home is an Island, 07885 499986, homeisanisland.co.uk. »

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

'Beautiful colours, textures and feel of the Shetland landscape'

'A perfect example of fleece to end product'

'A good ethos of organic and locally sourced raw materials'







CATEGORY

Retail and Services

Claire Coldwell, Plain Useful

Claire lives with her husband, Anthony, and children, Bea, 13, and James, eight, in an old farmhouse in the foothills of the Pennines near Holmfirth, Yorkshire.

Claire runs Plain Useful, which sells traditional kitchen utensils, cleaning brushes and gardening and laundry products. Having spent 25 years at the BBC in Manchester, she was ready for a change. 'Work was an hour and a half away and the commute was tiring. We moved to a property with a barn and ample storage. It set the scene for a new start. I live in a lovely part of the world, but most of the good shops are miles away so I do a lot of online shopping,' she says. 'An online business of my own seemed a natural option. Brushes were my starting point. Many years ago I used to visit a fabulous shop in Edinburgh (now gone), filled with beautiful brushes from floor to ceiling. I was hooked! I'm always looking for products that actually work, so I started a business with brushes and other utility products, but brushes were at the core, and I began trading last year.

'Happily, it's the brushes that are selling well. People are so intrigued by them! They'll ask if I have a brush for cleaning a teapot spout, then tell me about their great aunt's teapot. I love hearing people's stories and helping them.

'I was thrilled to win. After having worked for a large corporation, it's satisfying to have recognition for something I've achieved on my own.'

Plain Useful, 01484 680073, plainuseful.com.







WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

'Good range of products'

'Tapping into the utility chic trend'

'Opportunities to scale up'

'Making the everyday both beautiful and affordable'

'Rekindling vintage skills and techniques'

CATEGORY
Craft

Sian O'Doherty

Sian lives with her partner, Mike, four cats and 12 alpacas in Pembrokeshire where she creates knitted textiles from her workshop at home. Her love of knitting was fostered by her grandmother who originally taught her, and Sian graduated in 2012 with a degree in Contemporary Textiles from Carmarthen School of Art, where she specialised in knitting and weaving.

'I was fascinated by how I could manipulate the knitting machine to create interesting and unusual effects,' says Sian, who works at the college she graduated from as a co-course leader and teacher of knitting. 'I get a great deal of satisfaction from passing on my skills to the students and seeing them develop these techniques in their own creative way.'

Sian started her own business in 2013 and her textiles feature designs inspired by the romantic Pembrokeshire landscape. 'I am very proud of my Welsh heritage and create pieces that reflect this. In my work I have developed my own interpretation of traditional Welsh patterns, informed by elements of the coast – from the cliffs to shells on the beach. This is a beautiful part of the world – I always wanted to stay here – and a constant source of inspiration.

'I do my knitting on a domestic knitting machine and everything I make is handmade. I source the yarn from the UK, create the designs and then knit the products in my workshop. These range from knitted interior products to fashion accessories, and include lampshades, cushions, scarves, hats and wristwarmers.

'I'm excited about developing the business and next year plan a new heritage collection using the fleece from our alpacas.

'I was over the moon when I heard that I had won this award. It is an incredible honour and it really does mean so much to me.'

Sian O'Doherty, sianodoherty.co.uk. »



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

'Good colour palettes'

'Beautiful patterns'

'A modern twist on traditional designs'

'Superb presentation'

'From alpaca to end product'





CATEGORY

Hospitality and Leisure

Kesri Smolas, Drover's Rest

Kesri and her husband, Paul, live with their twins, Jaden and Kaila, aged seven, near Hay-on-Wye. They run boutique glamping holidays from their 16th-century sheep farm, with activities that aim to reconnect guests to nature and the simpler things in life.

Originally, Kesri and Paul had high-powered jobs in London, but they hankered after life in the country. They planned their move for 10 years before eventually leaving their jobs. 'We needed a stepping stone,' says Kesri, 'so I continued to work as a corporate training consultant.'

The couple fell in love with Hay-on-Wye and the Brecon Beacons National Park and, in 2009, sold their home and rented in the area until they found a suitable farmhouse with barns and land. They found one with 40 acres, and in 2015 started Drover's Rest. This comprises five safari tents and two cottages, used as holiday accommodation and for corporate training.

Their aim is to revive the joys of a rural childhood. Children (and their parents) can enjoy playing outdoors – feeding farm animals, den building, nocturnal walks, campfires. After only one season the response has been amazing. 'We now want to build off-season trade and complement it with corporate team retreats. One guest told us we'd put the glam back into glamping, as our tents with Feather & Black beds, Welsh blankets and woodburners are like canvas cottages.

'We've worked flat out, so it was rewarding to win an award so early on. The mentorship prize is perfect as we need guidance to build the business.'

Drover's Rest, 01497 831215, droversrest.co.uk.



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

'Roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-involved holiday idea'

'Pretty location and well-thought-out business plan'

'Like the educational angle for city children'





CATEGORY
Interiors

Zoe Glencross, Zoe Glencross Fabric & Home

Zoe lives with her husband, Jonah, and two children in Cheshire. Moving from Manchester to a converted barn in the countryside 18 months ago was the catalyst for her new business. 'The move prompted me to design and create,' she says. 'We are surrounded by fields and have views to the Peak District, and that inspired me to do something different.'

After doing a law degree, Zoe worked as an assistant buyer in London, then relocated to Manchester where she later worked for a bag brand, learning a lot about bringing a product to market. 'I've always had a passion for interiors – my garage is filled with fabric swatches! I did some interior design projects and fitted out the barn, which was a full-time job in itself for a few months. Then the chance came to take a breath.

'I've always loved drawing and creating. I learned about the craft





of printing and went on courses about block and screen printing, and fell in love with it. I came home and didn't stop – the house was covered in fabric!

'I set up a workshop in the garage and was prolific for six months. I knew I was going to create an interiors range and wanted to build a collection. I also run an online service providing colour and interiors advice.

'Texture, movement and light are what I try to capture in my designs. I hand-print on linen, which I am passionate about, as you get an imperfect textured effect. After going into production with British manufacturers, I set up my own website in June 2015.

'I was so excited to win an award – the last 18 months have been a journey of discovering new things and new skills.'

Zoe Glencross Fabric & Home, 07530 741812, zoeglencross.com. »





WHAT THE JUDGES SAID...

'Accomplished designs'

'Combination of stripes and illustrations'

'Good interior design eye'

'Offering interior design lifestyle service'

Category judges and mentors

AWARD WINNERS WILL RECEIVE THREE MENTORING SESSIONS WITH ONE OF OUR LEADING INDUSTRY CATEGORY PARTNERS...



Food
Dan Rusga, Marketing Director, Yeo Valley Farms
This family-run dairy produces tasty, 100% organic products from its award-winning British Friesian cows and from other local organic dairy farm herds.



British Wool Award for Emerging Talent Using British Wool
Bridgette Kelly, Consultant Interior Textiles Director, Campaign for Wool
British Wool sells and promotes wool from British-farmed breeds and works closely with the global textile industry.



Retail and Services
Carmel Allen, Creative Director, Heal's
Designing, making and selling quality furniture for over 200 years, Heal's has a long history of collaborating with prominent designers and is passionate about discovering future stars.

HEAL'S



Craft
Susannah Bradley, International Community Programs Specialist, Etsy
An online marketplace for handmade and vintage items, Etsy allows makers around the world to sell unique goods directly to market.

Etsy



Hospitality and Leisure
Alastair Sawday, Chairman, Alastair Sawday's
This family-owned travel company offering 5,000 special places to stay throughout the UK and Europe hand-picks and inspects every one of its properties.

Alastair Sawday's



Interiors
Susie Watson, Founder, Susie Watson Designs
Makers of beautiful handmade pottery, hand-printed fabric and interiors products that can be used every day to brighten up your home, Susie Watson Designs now has seven UK shops.

Susie Watson Designs

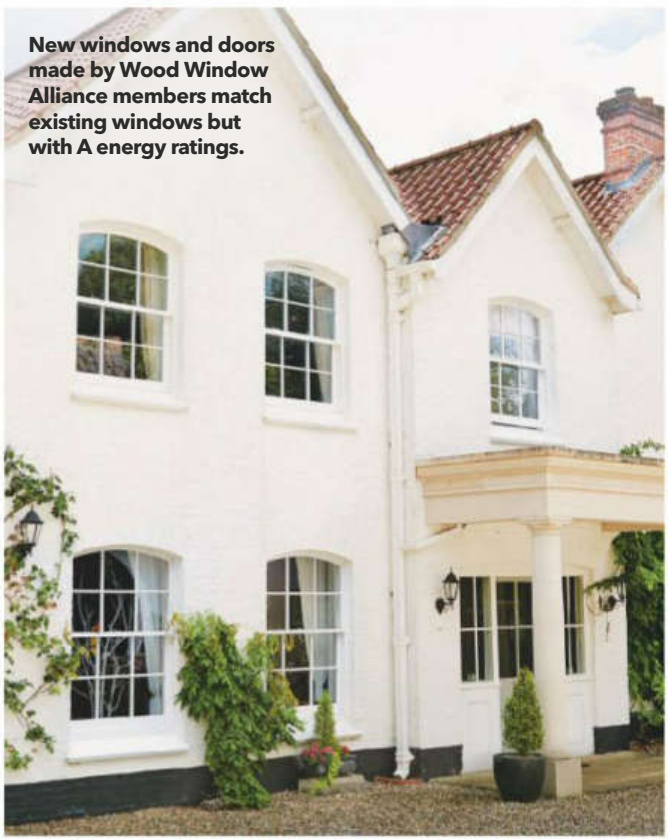
The amazing prizes

The 2015 winners will receive an invaluable package of mentoring and promotion in Country Homes & Interiors. Starting up your own business can often be a daunting experience, but our expert panel of Awards mentors will guide and support the winners, allowing them to learn new skills and perspectives, while also providing priceless advice and insight. The package includes:

- Three mentoring sessions with one of the expert Awards mentors (above).
- Coverage in the My Country Business Awards 2015 winners feature in Country Homes & Interiors.
- Country Days blog feature covering the winners in 2015/2016.

Be inspired by the warmth of wood

ENHANCE YOUR HOME WITH EXPERTLY CRAFTED, ENERGY EFFICIENT WINDOWS AND DOORS FROM THE WOOD WINDOW ALLIANCE



New windows and doors made by Wood Window Alliance members match existing windows but with A energy ratings.



When you think of a beautiful house, the windows might not be the first things that stand out, but getting the right style is essential to creating a harmonious exterior. This especially applies to period properties, where double-glazed wood windows work perfectly with the age of the house while keeping it warm inside. For Andrew Long, owner of a four-bedroom country home in Norfolk (above), wooden frames were the only choice when he and his family inherited the property in 2007.

'Some of the windows were still in a reasonable condition and could be fixed but others needed replacing,' he says. Andrew contacted a member of The Wood Window Alliance (WWA) because he wanted new windows that matched his existing ones. And, when he planned an extension later on, he contacted the company again. 'We'd been really impressed with them, and choosing wood windows and doors was an easy decision because wood respects the aesthetic of the house – nothing else would feel right,' he explains.

Andrew also discovered that his choice would be long-lasting and energy efficient, too. 'The frames are made from quality softwood and beautifully spray finished. They won't need repainting for around 10 years,' he says. 'The sash window frames I had fitted in 2007 are still in perfect condition, and we've noticed how much quieter and less draughty the house has been since we had them!'

It's also good to know that all windows and doors made by the WWA are from sustainably sourced timber, so you can be assured you've made an eco-friendly choice, too.

The Wood Window Alliance

The Wood Window Alliance has 22 members. All meet strict performance, quality and sustainability standards. To find one that's right for you, visit woodwindowalliance.com.

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Come to our design day

Learn about modern country style

BOOK AN EXCLUSIVE INTERIOR DESIGN COURSE WITH KLC SCHOOL OF DESIGN AND COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS









On the day

10am – 12.30pm

- Outline of the day.
- Introduction showing how interior designers use colour, texture and pattern in country homes and interiors.
- Colour theory and psychology, and how it relates to the country colour palette.
- Colour workshop.
- An overview of texture and pattern, plus using these with colour to develop a scheme.

12.30 – 1.30pm Lunch

1.30 – 4pm

- Colour, texture and pattern workshop.
- Sourcing tips.
- How to put all your ideas together on a sample board.
- Practical workshop: creating your look.
- Question and answer session.

KLC School of Design

Learn to decorate using modern country style on this exclusive one-day course, held at the KLC School of Design in London's Chelsea Harbour on Friday 20 November 2015. On the day, expert tutors will hold short lectures, talks and workshops, giving you the skills to create a relaxed and stylish home. You'll gain an insight into understanding the theory of colour and its effect on our psychology and environment. You'll learn more about the modern country palette, textures and patterns, and there will also be tips on drawing together fabrics, furniture and lighting for a beautiful interior.

How to book

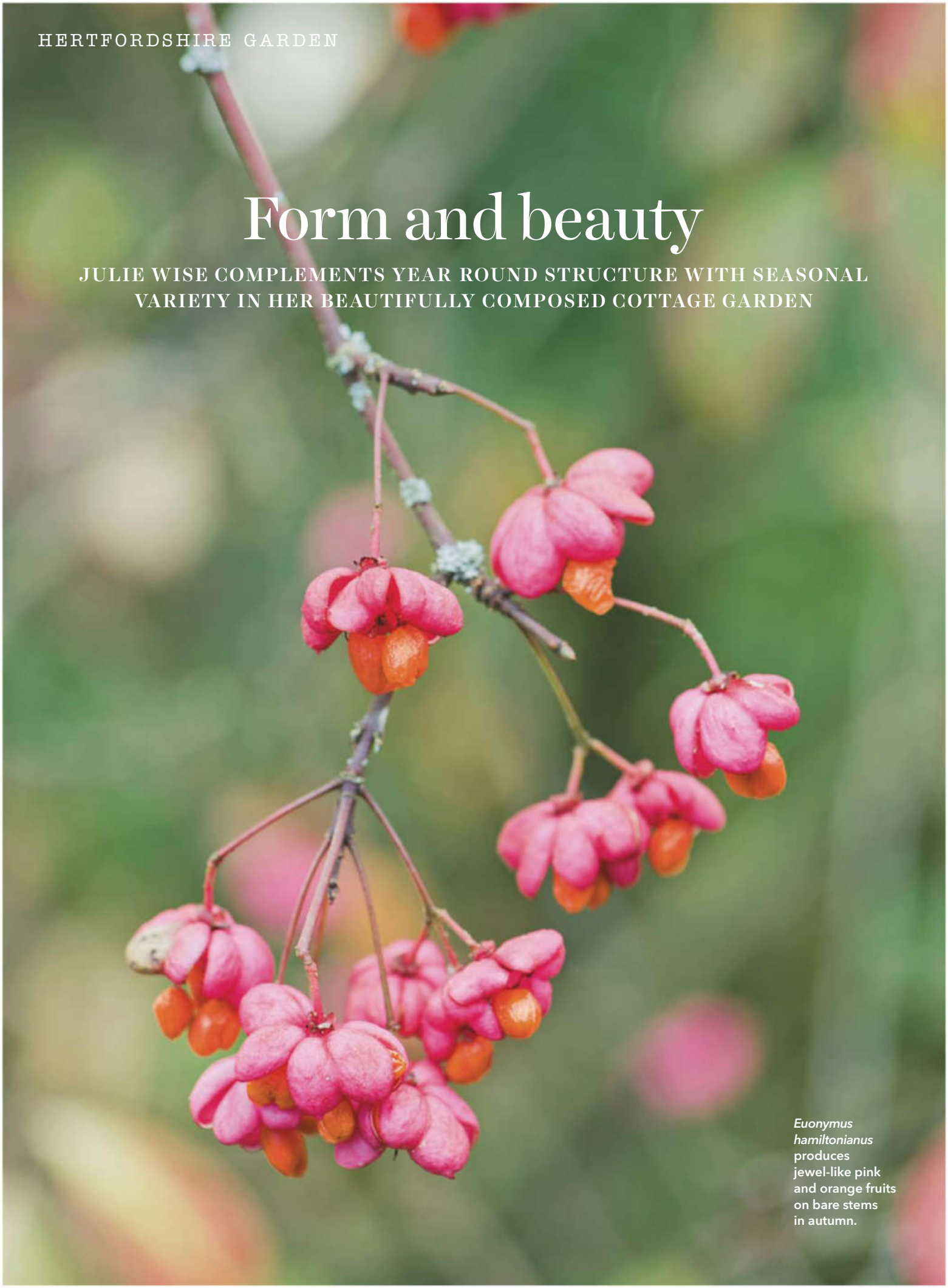
- Tickets cost £130 and include a sample board to take home, lunch and refreshments on the day.
- To reserve your place, visit klc.co.uk/countryhomes or call 020 7376 3377.
- KLC School of Design offers full-time, part-time, short and distance learning courses and is recognised by the Quality Assurance Agency. For details of its other courses, contact KLC School of Design, 503 Design Centre East, Chelsea Harbour, London SW10 0XF, 020 7376 3377, klc.co.uk.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS Tickets are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. KLC will refund course fees paid (less an administration charge of 10%) for cancellations made four weeks or more prior to the course start date. We are unable to refund fees under any circumstances for any cancellations made less than four weeks prior to the start of the course. Country Homes & Interiors and KLC reserve the right to change the format without notice and accept no liability if events are varied, relocated, postponed or cancelled.

PHOTOGRAPHS TIMEINCUKCONTENT.COM

Form and beauty

JULIE WISE COMPLEMENTS YEAR ROUND STRUCTURE WITH SEASONAL VARIETY IN HER BEAUTIFULLY COMPOSED COTTAGE GARDEN



Euonymus hamiltonianus produces jewel-like pink and orange fruits on bare stems in autumn.



The gate into the back garden is framed with ivy and clipped box. It opens onto a path edged with pine and other shrubs leading towards a carefully shaped laurel, *Prunus lusitanica*. »

The wavy waist-high box parterre is punctuated by vertical yew topiary in the front garden.



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Julie and Tim Wise, plus black Labrador Campbell and Bunty the Lurcher.

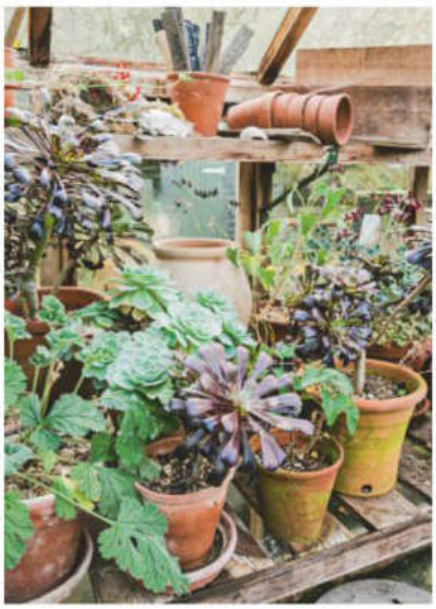
House Originally two brick-built estate workers' cottages dating from the 18th century.

Garden Half an acre on heavy clay soil. The space is divided into garden 'rooms' including dry, formal and woodland areas, as well as topiary and exuberantly planted borders.

When Julie and Tim Wise married in 1993 they had a wedding gift list, not at a well-known department store, but at Tree Heritage nursery in Hertford. It was a decision typical of the couple, who bought Rustling End Cottage in rural Hertfordshire from the Knebworth Estate the same year. At the time, the property was described by a friend as 'a tumbledown shed in an unkempt field', but Julie was hooked from her first visit. 'I thought the setting was wonderful, surrounded by woodland and fields. We were looking for a small house in a big plot where we could make a garden and this fitted the bill exactly,' she says.

'Most people finish the house before starting on the garden, but I didn't,' says Julie, who began clearance work outside while Tim got on with rebuilding the house. She had masses of ideas gleaned from years of enthusiastic garden-visiting, both at home and abroad (as a member of senior cabin crew for British Airways she visited gardens from Sydney to San Francisco), but Julie lacked the practical knowledge of how to put them into practice. So she embarked on a crash course in design and read her way through garden books by renowned experts Beth Chatto and Christopher Lloyd and also Dan Pearson, whose book on making the garden at Home Farm was a favourite. 'To start with, Tim and I made a rough plan of the site, measuring it and marking the few trees we wanted to keep.' Hedges were first to go in, small yew and hornbeam plants to mark the boundaries of the garden and to divide it into sections. 'I didn't want to see it all at once,' says Julie.

Twenty years on, the hedges are mature and the garden reveals itself slowly. From the road a bulging, organically shaped yew hedge frames glimpses of a largely green, formal front garden »





The curves of a metal table and chairs set, complete with candlestick, are echoed in the hornbeam hedge.

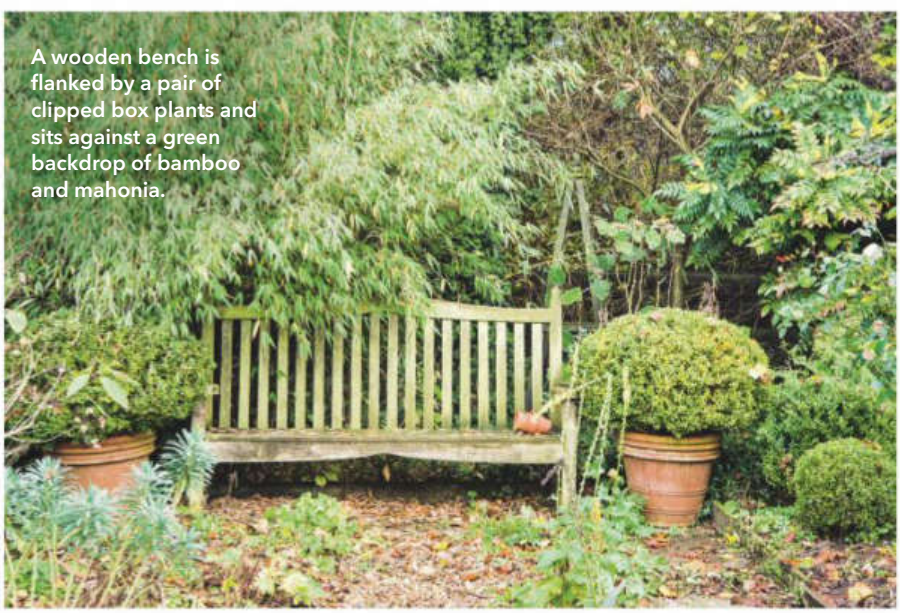


Euphorbia mellifera and rosemary thrive in a dry area by the back door.

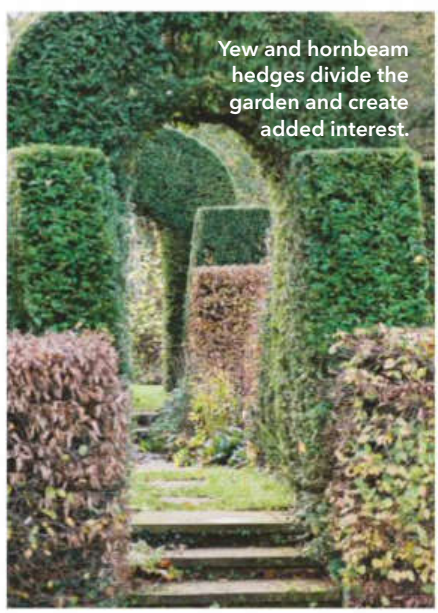
What we love most about this garden...

'It is very special at dawn. I often return from a flight very early in the morning, and find it so magical at that time'





A wooden bench is flanked by a pair of clipped box plants and sits against a green backdrop of bamboo and mahonia.



Yew and hornbeam hedges divide the garden and create added interest.



Deep pink *Sedum* 'Herbstfreude' contrasts beautifully with blue-grey *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*.

dominated by a lumpy, sculptural box parterre and tiered topiary yews. A small gate opens into a terrace at the back of the house where an old laurel, now a beautiful glossy dome of dark leaves, forms a focal point. 'It's clipped each year and, every fourth year, we give it a hard cut otherwise it starts to get out of proportion.' For Julie, proportion is important – the width of paths, the depths of borders, the relative scale of hedges, borders and feature trees.

Realising that her clay soil could dry and crack in a hot summer, Julie made a dry garden beside the terrace, planting drought-tolerant plants including artemisia, senecio, acanthus and grasses. Over the years, she has applied copious amounts of grit, sharp sand and organic matter to improve the sticky soil, and adds yet more when planting anything new. Sun-loving evergreens used in this area include *Euphorbia mellifera*, *Bupleurum fruticosum* and rosemary – all strongly shaped and textured plants providing year-round interest plus flowers, too.

Aligned with the back door, a path leads between a pair of wide herbaceous borders. In May, blue camassias mingle with the lipstick-pink flowers of red campion, leading in late summer and autumn to a mix of lythrum, rudbeckia, eupatorium, asters and lofty miscanthus. Because Julie could be away working for up to three weeks at a time she had to choose her plants carefully. 'Classic June borders were not going to work for me as they need too much attention,' she says. 'Instead, I started planting late-season perennials that largely look after themselves as they build toward their flowering period. The added bonus is that they also die beautifully, leaving gorgeous seedheads that can be left through winter.' Grasses, too, met Julie's need for plants that »

Modern Country Classic

Topiary

Top tips for creating strong shapes with yew, box and hornbeam.

Need to know...

- Use a combination of evergreen and deciduous shrubs for topiary and hedges – it creates a dramatic contrast of colour and texture.
- Grow a plant until it is mature before clipping it into a free-standing topiary shape rather than clipping it as it grows.
- If you don't like the shape you have created just let it grow out and have another go. Always step back to look at what you're doing and don't rush.
- Make sure your tools are sharp and use hand shears rather than power tools to create shapes.
- Clip topiary in July/August and it will stay in good shape through the winter. Always give specimens a thorough watering after clipping.



What makes this garden so special...
'The slight randomness of it all'

The summerhouse is just visible through the berries and autumn foliage of *Euonymus hamiltonianus*.



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The formal garden is enclosed by yew and hornbeam hedging with an urn water feature bringing movement to the rectangular pool.

look good for much of the year without too much cosseting. As is so often the case given that necessity is the mother of invention, Julie evolved a distinct planting style from the need to fit gardening around the demands of her working life.

The formal garden, with its central rectangular pond and urn water feature, provides a calm space that contrasts with the busy self-seeding and dense planting elsewhere in the garden. Appearing to float on water, the urn stands on a paving slab supported by the legs of an upturned office chair, one of Tim's many ingeniously engineered solutions to Julie's design ideas.

'When I stopped flying in 2009, I was worried I might be tempted to over-garden the place and that it would lose its spontaneity,' says Julie. She need not have worried, as she is as busy now as she ever was, as county organiser for the National Gardens Scheme, doing botanical surveys for Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust, and designing and maintaining gardens for other people. Now that gardening is the job as opposed to the leisure pursuit, Julie finds that the natural world is her outlet. In recent years, the field opposite the house – a rough pony paddock when they bought it in 2000 – has become a fascination for both Julie and Tim as it slowly returns to being a species-rich meadow.

In coming years, Julie intends to return the woodland garden to a more natural state, too, removing overly exotic specimens and replacing them with native ferns, species roses and more berried shrubs for the birds. A wise move for a wise couple.

☎ Rustling End Cottage, Rustling End, nr Codicote, Hertfordshire, SG4 8TD, rustlingend.com. Rustling End opens on selected dates throughout the year under the NGS scheme, ngs.org.uk. »



ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Daisy Roots nursery (07958 563355, daisyroots.com), near Hertford, for unusual herbaceous perennials and grasses. It was a silver-gilt medal winner at the 2015 RHS Chelsea Flower Show.'

Shop at... 'Hitchin's Friday market (01462 456202, hitchinmarkets.co.uk). The fantastic mix of stalls includes fishmongers, florists, furniture and bric-a-brac.'

Go for a meal at... 'Hopleys Café (01279 841188, hopleyscafe.co.uk) in Much Hadham – great food with the added bonus of being surrounded by plants.'


1


2


3


4

Julie's favourite autumn plants

1 The vibrant stems of dogwood provide wonderful late-season colour.

2 *Euphorbia mellifera* has bold foliage plus honey-scented flowers in spring.

3 *Clematis cirrhosa* var. *purpurascens* 'Freckles' is an evergreen climber.

4 The greenish-yellow flowers of *Cestrum parqui* are night-scented.

5 *Sedum* 'Herbstfreude' has deep-pink flowerheads that are loved by bees.

6 *Rosa* x *odorata* 'Mutabilis' produces single flowers over a long period.

7 *Hydrangea quercifolia*'s textured leaves can turn a fabulous red.

8 *Anemanthele lessoniana* glows copper, gold and bronze in autumn.


5


6


7


8

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLE DRAKE

NEXT MONTH SCOTTISH TOPIARY GARDEN



PLAN YOUR PERFECT GARDEN

IN ASSOCIATION WITH COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

We have teamed up with *My Design School* at KLC to create an exciting online gardening course that offers a new, effortless way to learn, enabling you to gain design inspiration at times to suit you.

Engaging, immersive and highly enjoyable, our course tutor and special guest experts will guide you through your garden project, while a welcoming online community allows you to share ideas with fellow course students.

Successful Gardens

2 November – 4 December 2015

Successful Gardens, taught by RHS Chelsea Flower Show medallist Matthew Childs, gives students the skills to transform an outside space. The course explores the use of plants, colour and texture, while also advising on garden accessories to help ensure a cohesive result.



Award-winning course tutor Matthew Childs

Course costs £299 when you book using code CH1015, saving £100*

BOOK NOW Visit klc.co.uk or call 020 7376 3377

About KLC School of Design

KLC School of Design is world renowned for the quality of its Interior and Garden Design training, offering a range of qualifications and flexible study methods. Established over 30 years ago, the school has an international reputation for providing practical, accessible and professional career training for the interior and garden design industries. As a recognised leader in online learning, KLC courses offer creative and inspiring tuition, stimulating interaction with other students and a highly enjoyable learning experience.

My Design School at KLC

*Course RRP £399. Offer ends 1st November 2015.

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10 WAYS TO

Make life lovely

FASHION, WELLBEING, ECO, PETS, TRAVEL AND OTHER NICE THINGS

1 Read a country life blog

Want to know what it's like to live in the country? These online bloggers share their experiences...

Shabby Chick Working rural mum Andrea writes about her busy life and suggests creative ideas for instilling a passion for the countryside into kids. Visit her blog at shabbychick.me.uk.

Margot Tries The Good Life Hilariously honest musings that follow Margot's transition from self-professed 'townie' to rural dweller, from keeping up with village gossip to dealing with lively lambs! Visit margottries thegoodlife.com.

Life in Mud Spattered Boots Anne's inspirational posts beautifully detail the simple pleasures that living in the countryside can offer. You can browse seasonal recipes, scenic walks, nature-inspired craft tutorials and much more at annewheaton.co.uk.



Wool **coat,** col Soft Taupe, £395, Poetry.

3 Pull on a new coat

Long, luxurious and with deep pockets to warm chilly hands, this is an autumn wardrobe must-have. The alpaca and wool blend has a gorgeous tactile finish and in go-with-anything taupe, it's perfect for woods and work!

2 LIGHT A FRAGRANT FARM-FRESH CANDLE

Inspired by the scents of fruit, veg, herbs and flowers found at farmers' markets, we love these new candles from Produce. Core fragrances, such as Carrot and Wildflower, sit alongside limited editions that change with the seasons - Rosemary, Sage, Fig and Honey are the latest. Handmade from natural soy wax, they burn cleanly to reveal cute hidden messages engraved on the patterned jars. A 9oz candle costs £19.99 from iloveproducecandles.co.uk.



4 PRICK UP YOUR EARS

Houndsounds **are the world's first 'dogcasts' - first-hand, true stories featuring dogs and people around the world. Free to download, each episode lasts no longer than 16 minutes - just right for a short walk! To find out more, or put forward your own story ideas, visit houndsounds.co.uk. »**



Have you gone noseblind?

What you smell | What your guests smell





NEW SCENTS

Continuously eliminates odours and freshens for 90 days.

*each refill lasts up to 90 days if used for 12 hours per day at minimum setting.

febreze ambi pur

Breathe Happy

5 Enjoy the wonder of honey

IN CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL HONEY WEEK (25-31 OCTOBER), WE'VE FOUND OUT MORE ABOUT THIS PANTRY-SHELF STAPLE...

Beat hayfever by eating a teaspoon of local honey daily – it's thought to help build immunity against allergens in your area.
Keep cuts clean with a mix of honey and warm water. The antibacterial properties help keep infection at bay and it works as a natural antiseptic.
Aid sleep with a brew of honey, chamomile and hot water.
Host your own hive in the garden – *Backyard Bees: A Guide for the Beginner Beekeeper* by Doug Purdie (£14.99, Murdoch Books) is packed with advice.
Go natural – buy 'raw' honey from a beekeeper (find one near you at honeybeehive.co.uk). Shop-bought jars are often ultra-filtered to stop them crystallising, stripping them of natural goodness.



6 Keep hands happy

COLD WEATHER IS TOUGH ON SKIN SO PROTECT WITH A NOURISHING CREAM

- Treat yourself to a refreshing blend of honey, luscious berries and wild mint, Look Lively Hand Cream, £7 for 75ml, White Stuff.
- All ingredients in this eco-friendly cream are sustainably sourced, Rose & Frankincense Hand Cream, £10 for 75ml, Humble.
- Infused with almonds and Cordoba apricot, this healing lotion restores dry skin, Luxurious Hand Balm, £22 for 50ml, Diptyque.





7 Buy British DEAN FORGE

Dean Forge was founded in 1969 in the charming village of Dean Prior, deep in rural Devonshire. It is run by father-and-son team Michael and Simon Chew, who manufacture and install traditional wood stoves, including their own beautiful handcrafted range in which each new stove is named after a local beauty spot. The latest addition is the Dartmoor Baker, priced from £1,095 – a traditional woodburner combined with a compact oven. Simon took his inspiration from family life in the countryside: 'It's great for stews and hotpots – just leave them to slow cook while you head out for a long walk.' Call 01364 643574 or visit deanforge.co.uk.

8 *Insulate the home naturally*

Looking for eco-friendly wall, floor or roof insulation? NaturePro's blend of sheep's wool (right) and recycled plastic has natural properties to keep your home warm in winter and cool in summer, £56.05 for eight 1.2m rolls, natureproinsulation.co.uk.



9 LOVE AN OLD WIVES' TALE

There are few things more inviting than an open fire. However, according to tradition, entering a neighbour's home to find the mistress poking the flames is a sign that you're not welcome! »

SEE PAGE 173 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

10 Relax at a me-time retreat

UNWIND AND REBALANCE BODY AND SOUL WITH A MINI BREAK OF MEDITATION, YOGA AND SPA TREATMENTS



BAMFORD HAYBARN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

We love it because... This is an energising retreat with great food from the working farm, a cookery school and a holistic spa.
What is the accommodation like? There are several cottages. Try The Old Farmhouse or The Egg Store, styled in soothing tones and both seconds from the relaxing spa!
And activities? Tap into the mindfulness trend with a guided workshop or stretch out in yoga and pilates classes, then indulge in treatments using Bamford Botanic products in the Haybarn.
How much? From £342 for a weekend cottage when booking with a Haybarn Spa treatment or Cookery School course.
Bamford Haybarn Spa, Daylesford, 01608 731703, bamford.co.uk, daylesford.com.



THE POTTING SHED AT THE PIG, HAMPSHIRE

We love it because... Set in the grounds of The Pig hotel, this is an ideal place to recharge with healthy food, spa treatments and New Forest walks.
What is the accommodation like? Choose from boutique-style rooms with shabby-chic style in the main house or book a private lodge.
And activities? Head to the garden for soothing treatments in the original potting shed or the rustic shepherd's hut. Try the signature treatment of head and body massage, plus rejuvenating facial.
How much? From £149 for a small snug room in the main house to £345 for a lodge, plus treatment costs.
The Potting Shed at The Pig, 0845 077 9494, thepighotel.com.



MOTHER EARTH AT THE NEW INN, HEREFORDSHIRE

We love it because... It's the perfect eco-friendly retreat to reconnect with nature, in magnificent countryside near Hay-on-Wye.
What is the accommodation like? This cosy abode is packed with reclaimed items, chunky woodwork and a woodburner, creating a welcoming feel.
And activities? Enjoy walks through the fields, then on your return hop into the whiskey barrel hot tub for a soak before cooking a rustic feast on the fire. Step into the old barn for quiet time or meditation classes (by arrangement) or stargaze through the glass roof portal at night.
How much? From £105 a night for 2, with space for 4 more at £20 per person.
Mother Earth, 0117 204 7830, canopyandstars.co.uk.



FEATURE TARA KING, COLUMBA COLIVET **PHOTOGRAPHS** (DOG, WOOL) TIMEINCUKCONTENT.COM, (HONEY) CATH MUSCAT GLOVES (IN HAND CREAMS PHOTOGRAPH), £25, CELTICANDCO.COM


What you smell.
What your guests smell.
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Have you gone noseblind?
Febreze truly eliminates odours and leaves a light Christmas scent.
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Breathe Happy



A celebration of the WOODLAND HARVEST

There's an abundance of seasonal treats just waiting to be picked in our wild woods and forests right now. Reconnect with nature's own larder of mushrooms, berries and rose hips and make the most of their simple, honest flavours in this rich, robust autumn menu »



On an autumn walk, fill baskets with hips, chanterelles, plums and berries.



Wild mushrooms on homemade sourdough toast



Wild mushroom soup »

WILD MUSHROOMS ON HOMEMADE SOURDOUGH TOAST

This stylish starter includes Horn of Plenty, a common wild woodland mushroom.
SERVES 4

40g butter
300g Horn of Plenty mushrooms, roughly torn
300g Chanterelle mushrooms
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 slices sourdough bread (see recipe, below)
Crème fraîche and red or black lumpfish caviar, to serve (try The Grimsby Fish Company)

1 Melt the butter and fry the mushrooms and garlic with a little salt and pepper for about 5 minutes, until the mushrooms are tender.
2 Meanwhile, make the toast. Spoon mushrooms onto each slice, then top with a little crème fraîche, lumpfish caviar and black pepper.

ROSEMARY AND SEA SALT SOURDOUGH

Sourdough is the perfect texture for toasting and topping with seasonal treats.
MAKES 1 LARGE LOAF

300ml bottled mineral water
10g fresh yeast
650g organic strong white bread flour
100g organic strong wholemeal flour, plus extra for dusting
1½ tsp sea salt flakes
2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for oiling bowl
2 tsp finely chopped fresh rosemary
Around 225ml lukewarm water

1 Make the starter 2 days ahead: put the mineral water in a jug, large enough for the starter to rise, and stir in the yeast. Add 250g of the white flour and mix to a smooth thick paste. Cover with a tea towel and leave to stand at room temperature for 48 hours, until frothy and bubbling. It is now ready for use.
2 Put the remaining flours, salt, oil and rosemary in a bowl. Add 250g of the starter and the lukewarm water. Mix to a dough with a round-bladed knife, adding a dash more water if the dough is too dry. Turn out onto a worksurface dusted with flour and knead for 10 minutes until smooth and elastic.
3 Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with clingfilm and leave to rise in a warm place for about 1½ hours or until doubled in size.
4 Shape the dough into a neat ball and place on a floured baking sheet, or put the dough in a round proving basket – we like the selection at Doves Farm. Cover loosely with a tea towel and leave to rise in a warm place until once again doubled in size, about 1 hour.
5 Preheat the oven to 230°C/Fan 210°C/Gas 8. Place a roasting tin on the lower shelf of the oven and pour in 2cm boiling water. If proving in a basket, invert the risen dough gently out onto a baking sheet. Place the baking sheet on the top shelf and bake for 30 minutes. Tap the base of the risen dough with your knuckles; it'll sound hollow when done. If necessary, bake a little longer keeping a close eye on the loaf.

WILD MUSHROOM SOUP

Use mixed wild mushrooms if you can to add a distinctively rich flavour to this creamy soup.
SERVES 4

25g butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 sticks of celery, chopped
1 garlic clove, chopped
600g mixed wild mushrooms or field mushrooms, roughly chopped
2 tsp chopped thyme, plus extra to garnish
750ml vegetable stock
4-6 tbsp crème fraîche
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Warmed bread, to serve

1 Melt the butter in a large saucepan and gently fry the chopped onion and celery for 5 minutes to soften. Stir in the garlic and mushrooms and cook gently, stirring frequently for a further 5 minutes.
2 Add the thyme and stock and bring to a gentle simmer. Cover the pan with a lid and cook for 20 minutes.
3 Blend the soup in a food processor or using an immersion blender. Stir in the crème fraîche and season to taste with salt and pepper. Ladle the soup into bowls, scatter with extra thyme and serve with the warmed bread.



Confit of lamb with mushrooms and autumn chutney »

Elderberry cordial



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Rose hip jam with homemade crispbreads »

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CONFIT OF LAMB WITH MUSHROOMS

Slow-cooked lamb and roast vegetables is superb with Autumn chutney (recipe, below).
SERVES 6

8 crushed juniper berries, 4 crushed garlic cloves,
1 tbsp chopped thyme, 2 tsp sea salt flakes and
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper, for the rub
1 shoulder of lamb on the bone (about 2kg)
2 onions, sliced
1 medium butternut squash, cut into small chunks
4 carrots, thickly sliced
3 bay leaves
400g mixed wild mushrooms, sliced if large
Flat-leaf parsley, to garnish

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/Fan 180°C/Gas 6. Combine the first 5 ingredients and rub all over the lamb. Scatter the onion in a roasting tin and place lamb on top. Roast for 30 minutes. Reduce heat to 150°C/Fan 130°C/Gas 2. Cover with foil and roast for 5 hours, until tender.
2 Leave the lamb until cool enough to handle. Pour the juices and fat into a bowl, then skim off the fat and discard. Cut lamb into chunks.
3 Increase oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Mix butternut, carrots and bay leaves in a dish and put lamb and onions on top. Stir in mushrooms and drizzle with juices. Cover with a lid and cook for 1½ hours, until the vegetables are tender. Serve with chutney (see recipe, below).

AUTUMN CHUTNEY

This tangy fruit chutney is perfect with hearty casseroles, cold meats or cheese.
MAKES 600G

500g red plums, stoned
1 large cooking apple, chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
20g fresh root ginger, chopped
150ml white wine vinegar
1 cinnamon stick
100g caster sugar

1 Place all the ingredients in a large pan, and cook gently, stirring often until the juices start to run. Continue cooking for about 25 minutes, until thick and pulpy.
2 Spoon into sterilised jars and cover with lids. Keeps in the fridge for several months.

ELDERBERRY CORDIAL

Enjoy picking bunches of elderberries and turning them into this jewel-coloured drink.
MAKES 500ML

500g elderberries, thick stalks removed
400g granulated or caster sugar
Freshly squeezed juice of 1 lemon

1 Place the elderberries in a pan, cover with cold water and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook over a low heat for 15 minutes, stirring now and again. Line a sieve with kitchen paper and rest it over a bowl. Strain the berries, squeezing as much juice as possible from pulp.
2 Measure 500ml juice into the washed pan, then add the sugar. Heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Stir in the lemon juice. Leave to cool then pour into sterilised screw- or clip-topped bottles. Keeps for several months in the fridge. Serve diluted; add a splash to a glass of fizz; or make a hot toddy using boiling water.

ROSE HIP JAM WITH HOMEMADE CRISPBREADS

Rose hips, ripening in the hedgerows now, make a fragrant jam to complement artisan cheeses.
SERVES 6

For the jam
3 tbsp lemon juice
500g large rose hips, topped and tailed, halved and deseeded
250g caster sugar
1 vanilla pod, halved lengthways
For the crispbreads
125g rye flour, plus extra for dusting
100g plain white flour
25g rye flakes, plus extra for dusting
½ tsp salt
1 tsp fennel seeds, lightly crushed
½ tsp caraway seeds
25g butter, cut into pieces

1 Put the lemon juice and 6 tbsp water in a pan and tip in the rose hips. Cover and simmer very gently, stirring frequently, for about 20 minutes, until tender. Add the sugar and vanilla pod and heat gently until sugar dissolves. Continue to cook for 10 minutes until syrupy. Remove pod. Transfer jam to sterilised screw- or [continues on page 160] »

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Chocolate tartlets with wild autumn berries »

clip-topped preserving jars. Keeps in the fridge for up to 3 months.

2 To make the crispbreads, preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Line 2 large baking sheets with baking parchment. Put both flours and the rye flakes in a bowl with the salt, seeds and butter. Rub in with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in 150ml water and mix to a dough. Divide into 4 pieces and on a surface generously dusted with rye flour and rye flakes, roll out each wafer thin. You may find it easier to transfer 2 half-rolled pieces to each baking sheet and to finish rolling once positioned.

3 Bake the crispbreads for 25-30 minutes until crisp, turning the pieces halfway through baking. Leave to cool and break into smaller pieces. Serve with the jam and cheese.

CHOCOLATE TARTLETS WITH WILD AUTUMN BERRIES

Spicy pastry cases hold a silky chocolate and autumn berry filling for a luscious dessert.

MAKES 8

For the pastry

4 whole star anise
75g golden caster sugar
150g self-raising flour
50g cornflour
½ tsp ground mixed spice
175g slightly salted butter, cut into pieces

For the filling

300g lingonberries (see cook's tip), blackberries, bilberries or similar, plus extra to decorate
5 tbsp caster sugar
150g plain chocolate, chopped
250ml double cream

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Break the star anise into pieces and place in a small grinder (an electric coffee grinder is ideal) with 4 tbsp of the sugar. Blend until finely ground. Tip the mixture into a food processor and add the remaining sugar, flour, cornflour, mixed spice and butter. Blend until the mixture forms a thick paste.

2 Divide the paste into 8 even-sized pieces. Use each piece to line 8 individual 10-11cm tartlet tins, pressing the paste up the sides of the tins with your fingers. Push a circle of foil down into the centre of each tart to hold the paste in place during baking. Bake for 20 minutes, then remove the foil. Bake for a further 5 minutes and leave to cool.

3 Put the berries in a saucepan with 3 tbsp sugar and heat gently for a few minutes until the fruits have softened and turned pulpy. Leave to cool.

4 Put the chocolate in a bowl. Put the remaining sugar in a saucepan with half the cream and heat gently until hot and bubbling around the edges, but not boiling up. Pour over the chocolate and stir until the chocolate has melted. Stir in the remaining cream.

5 Divide the berries between the cases and spoon the chocolate mixture on top. Leave in a cool place or the fridge, to firm up. Serve scattered with extra berries.

Cook's tip Fresh lingonberries are in season in late summer and autumn, but are very difficult to find unless you live in the cooler areas of the United Kingdom, such as the Yorkshire Moors and Scotland.

Play-it-safe foraging

Mushroom picking has become popular again, but it's essential to exercise caution because eating the wrong thing could have fatal consequences. To improve your knowledge of which fungi to pick and which to avoid, a course is a good place to start.

Foodforagingcourses.co.uk This online directory of courses from across the UK helps you find what's on offer in your local area through the seasons.

River Cottage Explore the beautiful Devon and Dorset countryside with a day of fungi foraging, cooking and feasting at the River Cottage Cookery School, rivercottage.net.

Wild Food UK Join this fungi-foraging team at various locations around the country, including in Surrey, Herefordshire and Hampshire, wildfooduk.com.

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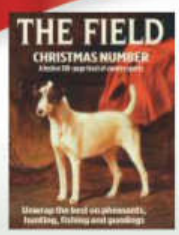
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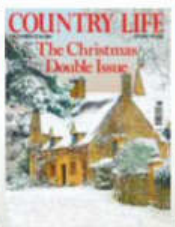
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‘MY QUIRKY COUNTRY PUB IS A REAL FEAST FOR THE SENSES’

Pub owner Audrey Bardsley

It’s known locally as “the flowery little pub” and the interiors are a real talking point,’ says Audrey Bardsley, owner of eclectic country pub The Black Swan, located in a rural hamlet in the pretty Cheshire countryside. This is a pub that has character by the spadeful – along with a quaint and historic exterior, the colourful country-cottage interior boasts the real fires that are intrinsic to a rural inn, as well as designer fabrics and wallpapers, Farrow & Ball paint, plus a wealth of unusual antique and auction-room finds. With a reputation for serving delicious food and real ale (it offers four cask ales, all from local micro breweries), it’s become a magnet for the local community and visitors alike.

Audrey’s route to becoming a publican was slightly unconventional. Having taken a politics degree, followed by a law degree, she next trained to be a solicitor. She was running her own business, when in 2003 a hotel in the Lake District called The Swan was handed down through the family to her. ‘It was a steep learning curve,’ she admits.

At the time she had two very young daughters, Ottilie, now 15, and Coco, now 11. ‘Having children had an impact on what I wanted to do with the hotel. I wanted to create somewhere that I could take the children, so I modelled it on what I would want.’ Renovation work was carried out and, just when it was finished, floods hit Cumbria and the hotel was closed for eight months while much of the work was redone.

Then, in 2012, The Black Swan came into Audrey’s life. ‘I went for a walk with friends on Boxing Day and ended up at the pub and I just fell in love with it. It’s a lovely old building and in a very beautiful spot. When I found out it was for sale, I thought it would be lovely to replicate what I’d done at The Swan.’

Inside, the pub had been renovated with a modern design. ‘A lot of character had been removed,’ says Audrey, ‘so we spent six months ripping it to bits and trying »



Audrey wanted to create the sort of cosy pub she'd like to visit with her own family.

What I love most...

'SEEING PEOPLE'S FACES WHEN THEY COME INTO THE PUB FOR THE FIRST TIME. THEIR EYES DART AROUND TAKING IT ALL IN'

to put back some of the character. We built an inglenook fireplace and opened up the other fires. We also exposed original beams that had been boxed in.'

Audrey has a passion for interior design, so had a very definite vision of how the pub should look. 'I wanted it to be light, airy and fresh – and to reflect the countryside – so we incorporated tweeds, hunting scenes and antlers. It's feminine but a country pub at its heart. I was keen for it to represent what we're about – somewhere that's comfy, cosy and homely.'

Having learned a lot from renovating The Swan twice, Audrey knew she wanted an eclectic, modern country look inspired by her travels. 'I love Designers Guild fabrics and I also wanted to incorporate Ralph Lauren and Anna French designs, as well as Lewis & Wood and Cath Kidston wallcoverings.' Dotted around the pub, accessories include amazing antique and auction room buys. The place certainly lives up to its motto, painted on the exterior, 'a country pub with taste'. The new look has received a positive reaction, and the pub has become a meeting place for the surrounding farming community. 'Locals still flock here,' says Audrey. 'The men were surprisingly receptive! They come and sit in their overalls on the flowery Ralph Lauren bar stools.'



Audrey plans the menus for the days ahead with The Black Swan chef.

The pub also prides itself on its reputation for good food. 'We're real foodies and we wanted to create high-quality unpretentious dishes made from local ingredients. We have a wood-fired outdoor pizza oven where all sorts of food, as well as pizza, is cooked,' says Audrey.

As well as dinner, people come in at all times of day. 'We have ladies who lunch and we also do morning coffee with cake and afternoon tea. We host shoot lunches, too, when everyone comes in wearing breeches, and organise hunt lunches and breakfasts. The camera and book clubs also meet here.' There's plenty of room for social gatherings – upstairs there's a space for private dining, as well as a meeting room.

A typical day for Audrey involves meeting the chefs, checking the dishes and the specials, and finding out from the staff what's selling well and about any special occasions coming up. 'Then I'll check that the pub looks tidy and fresh, and that the fires are lit. There are always new challenges and running a pub and a hotel are very different. The pub is more intense because it's smaller and you have your regulars, rather than a transient clientele.

'The Black Swan is almost an extension of my home as I go there with friends and enjoy it. We take the dogs and the children and when we walk in and the fires are gleaming, it's cosy and welcoming. It's one of those places that makes you feel happy.'

☎ The Black Swan, Lower Withington, Cheshire SK11 9EQ, 01477 571770, blackswancheshire.com. »



The private dining room.



Lamb shank pie with port and rosemary is a favourite.



The welcoming inglenook fireplace is key to the pub's character.











Part of The Black Swan's marketing (centre right) is a local circular walk that takes you around the edges of fields and farmland.

ON MY DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Rode Hall Farmers' Market (01270 874101, rodehallfarmersmarket.co.uk) at Scholar Green on the first Saturday of every month for a fantastic array of local produce.'

Shop at... 'Tuula (01625 586399) in Alderley Edge – it's an independent womenswear shop that has a gorgeous selection of clothes and accessories.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Black Swan (01477 571770, blackswancheshire.com), of course! Walk along the footpath opposite the pub, then reward yourself with Sunday lunch after.'

Small business advice

HOW TO STYLE YOUR BRAND

Follow our guide to creating a distinctive identity with personality







The Black Swan has a very individual personality and Audrey Bardsley has worked hard to create an appealing interior, using colour, pattern and typography, as well as an attractive exterior that has masses of kerb appeal. Brand identity is important because it will get you noticed, and The Black Swan has done this very successfully. 'I would go miles now to visit this pub,' says Fiona Humberstone, branding expert and author of *How to Style Your Brand: Everything You Need to Know to Create a Distinctive Brand Identity*. 'Brand styling is about emphasising your best assets and creating a cohesive and compelling look. It's about telling a story, evoking the senses and captivating your clients. By combining the right balance of colour, type, illustration and photography, you'll create a brand identity that's authentically and distinctively you. Focus on what makes you different – your brand identity communicates what makes you special. First impressions count. The Black Swan has made a real effort with the interior so you imagine that the food is going to be amazing, too. People judge you, and they especially judge a business – brand identity helps you stand out.' Fiona's advice on brand styling includes:

Be focused. 'Think about the message you want to communicate. What the business is about, what makes you unique, who your clients are, what you want to be known for, how you want to come across [you can download free resources to help from Fiona's website thebrand-stylist.com]. Start off by being focused – otherwise everything else becomes harder later on.'

Find inspiration. 'Look at things that inspire you, for example, on Pinterest, in magazines, even in your local area. Take photos and compile a scrapbook. Work out why you like things and how you can bring that into your own brand.'

Understand how colour psychology works as it's your secret weapon. 'Branding is subjective and colour psychology brings a level of objectivity to it. It helps you turn a set of words into colours, patterns, textures, tones and shapes, and pulling together the right ones sends out the right signals. There are four main seasons with very distinctive personalities that provide the basis for selecting colour, texture, pattern and other brand styling elements. Work out what season your brand is because each one has its own characteristics, then you can pick colours that say the right things about your brand – for instance, spring is light, summer is muted, autumn is warm and winter clear, intense and cool. When you've finalised your inspiration board, you'll have an idea how the brand is going to look and feel. It will be a springboard for your ideas and the starting point for the fonts, photography and colour palette you use. Think about whether you want to do it yourself or outsource it. Have you got the time and do you want to do it? If you work with a designer, see whether their portfolio reflects what your moodboard looks like and whether you are on the same wavelength.'

Take another step back. 'If you're rebranding your current business, evaluate what needs changing. Lay everything out and think, is this sending out the message I want? How does it compare to my moodboard? What do I keep and what do I need to change?'

Be analytical at every stage and rely on your gut feeling. 'Always ask yourself, do I like it and what does it say about my business?' Finally, advises Fiona, when you are reviewing creative work ask yourself five questions: How does each element meet the brief? Does this reflect what I set out to achieve? Does it look cohesive? Does it feel right? Am I proud of it?

***How to Style Your Brand: Everything You Need to Know to Create a Distinctive Brand Identity* (£20, Copper Beech) by Fiona Humberstone.**

The one lesson I've learned...

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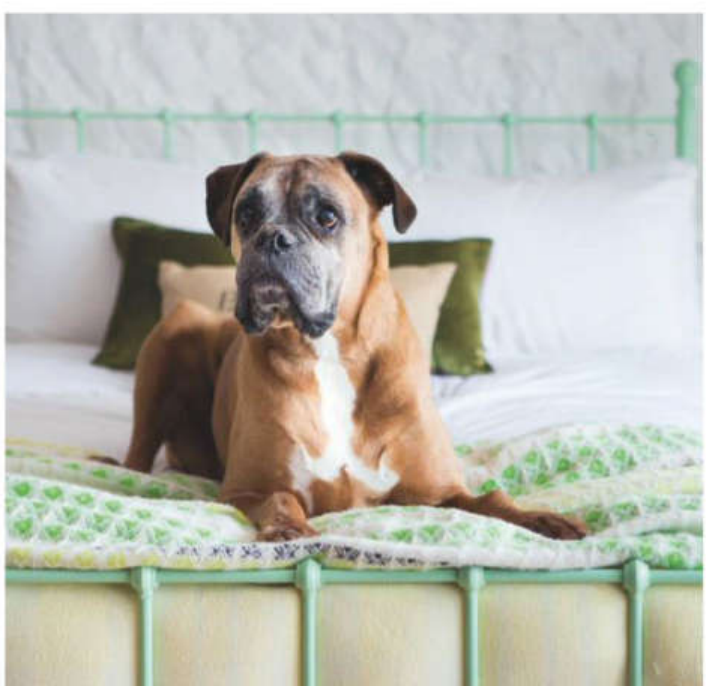
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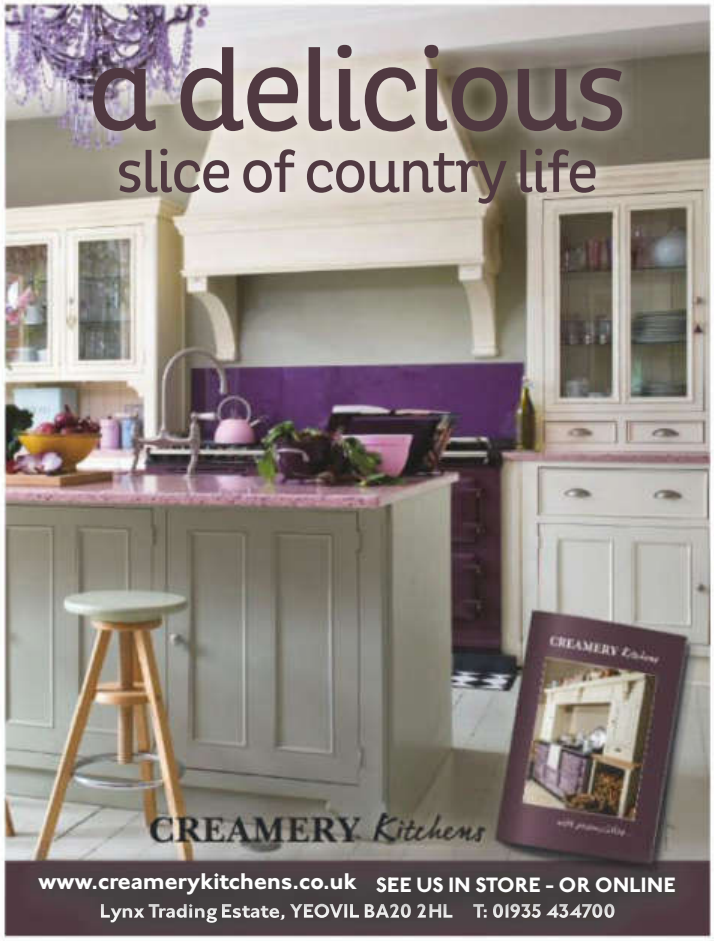


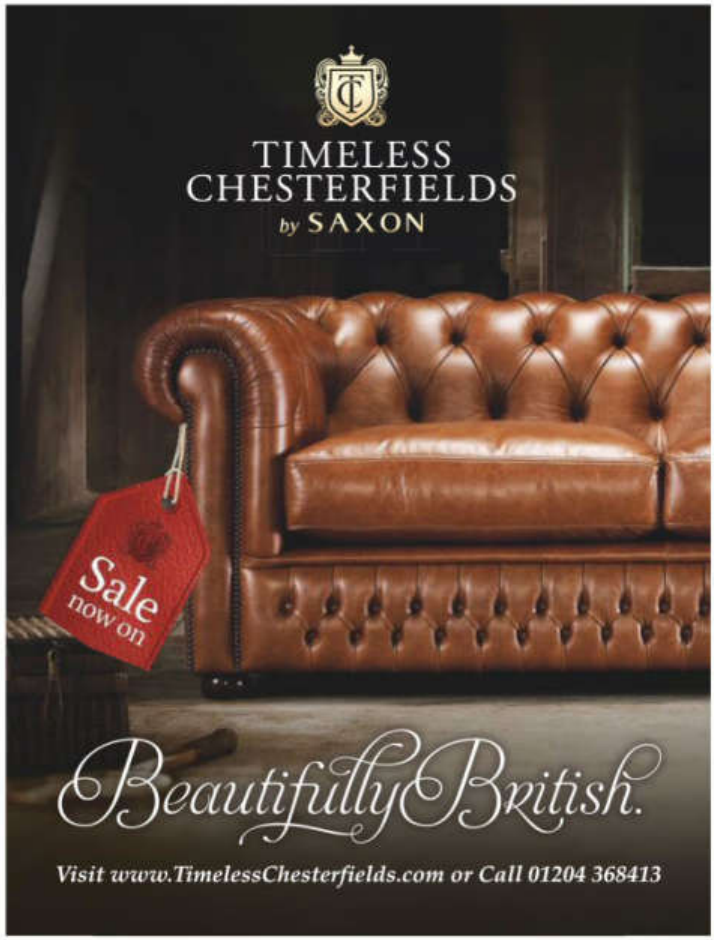
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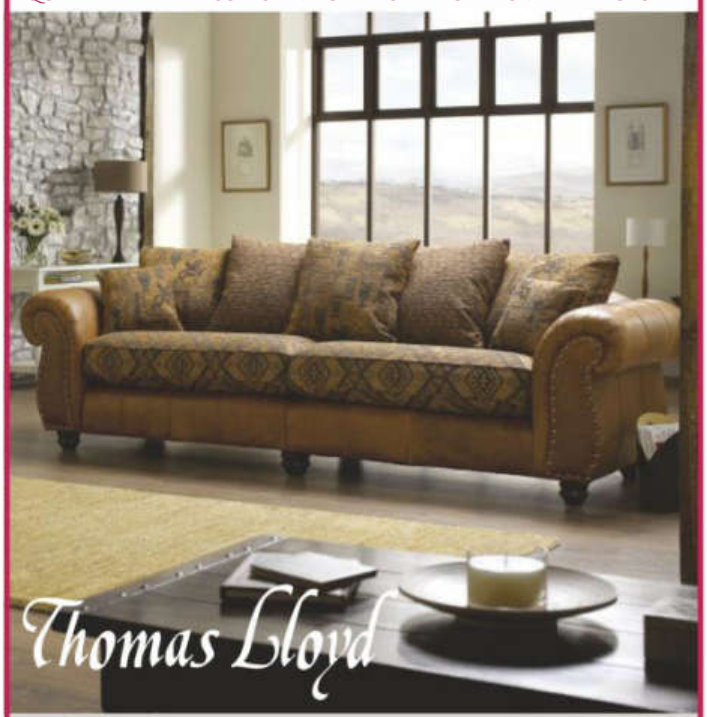
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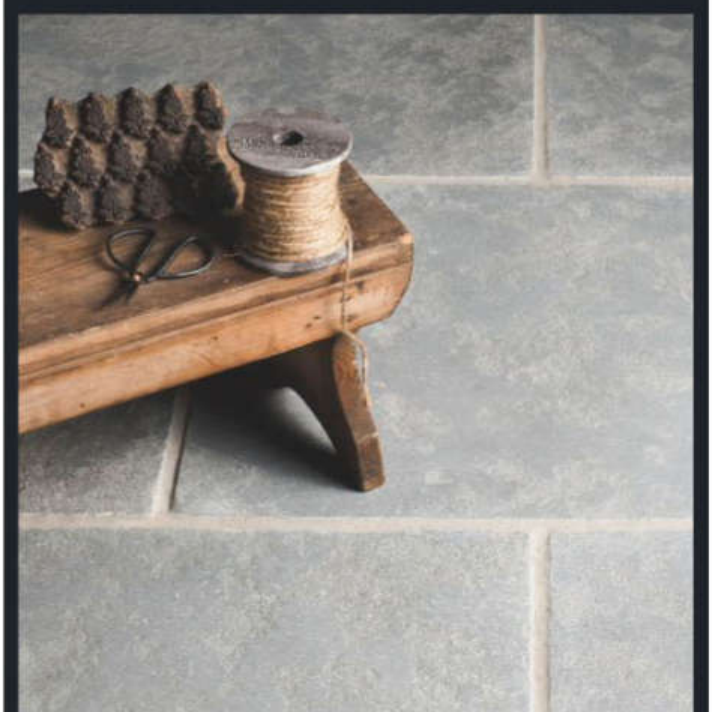
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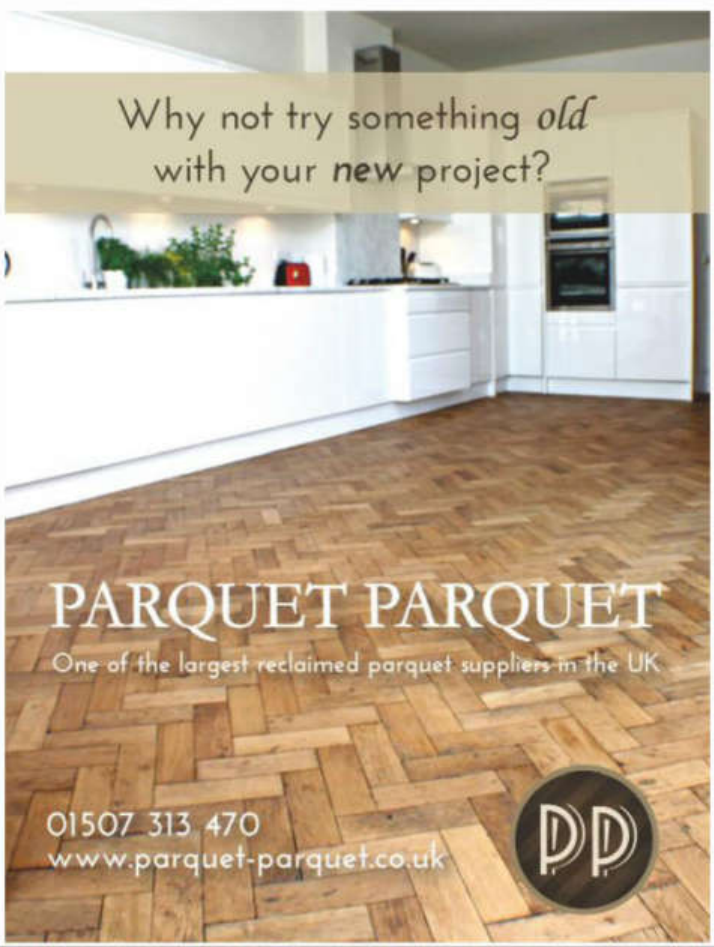
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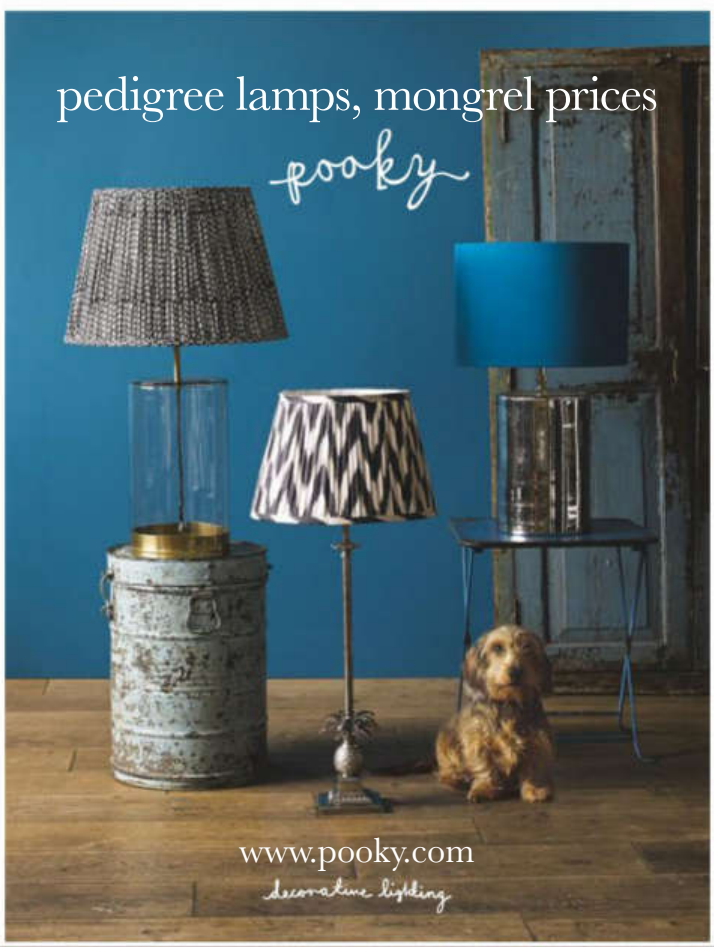
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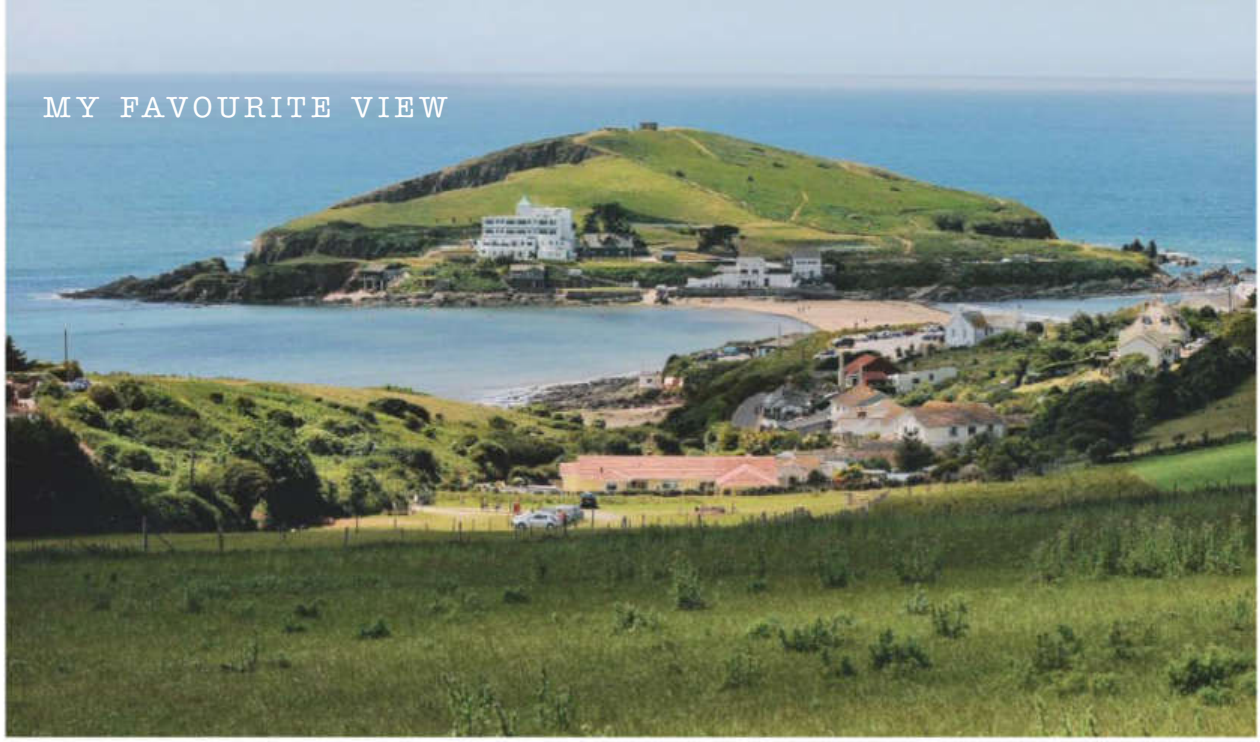




HOME ACCESSORIES







‘I’M A BIG FAN OF BURGH ISLAND OFF THE SOUTH COAST OF DEVON’

Garden designer Marcus Barnett



This is such a magical place. Burgh Island can be reached across the sands at low tide, but is actually cut off from the mainland at high tide. It holds so many happy childhood memories for me. I used to spend the summer holidays here with my parents, brother and sister. It was always the perfect place for us. The drive down to the south Devon coast from far-flung Essex, where I grew up, used to take seven hours and we’d always have a competition in the car as to who would see the sea first. I still remember the sense of excitement as we snaked down to Bigbury-on-Sea along the high-sided country lanes, then the spectacular view would suddenly open up before you.

Burgh Island is definitely best enjoyed during the summer but part of its charm is that it’s always changing. At high tide, it becomes an island and at low tide a sandbank is revealed. There used to be a special sea tractor that could be driven down on the sand and even through the sea – I think it may still be there. As a child, it was a real adventure to have a ride on the tractor. We used to stay in the Art Deco Burgh Island Hotel which was made popular by Noël Coward and Agatha Christie, who wrote some of her novels while staying there.

When I was young, the hotel had rather a shabby air, but since then it has been transformed into a lovely and rather luxurious place and has become a real landmark. When my family used to stay there we had regular power cuts and the water would often be turned off, but we didn’t care at all – it just added to the whole experience.

I always feel a sense of wonder whenever I am reminded of the view towards Burgh Island and in some ways that feeling is something that I try to recreate for my clients through my garden designs. I want people to see their garden and walk through it with the same sense of excitement and joy that I remember on my childhood holidays.

With some projects I work on it is possible to create a sudden ‘opening up’ of a beautiful view – a bit like that first glimpse of the sea I remember so well as a child. At its best, garden design often includes an element of theatre and drama [Marcus has designed five gardens for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and won his third gold medal at this year’s show with stunning primary coloured perennials planted within a formal grid for *The Telegraph* entry]. My love of water in gardens may also have been triggered by idyllic memories of Burgh Island – it would be nice to think so.

For information about Marcus Barnett’s designs, call 020 7736 9761 or visit marcusbarnett.com. Burgh Island can be reached from Bigbury-on-Sea, for details visit bigburyonsea.com.

FEATURE SARAH WILSON **PHOTOGRAPHS** ANDREW LLOYD/ALAMY, (INSET) MILLIE PILKINGTON

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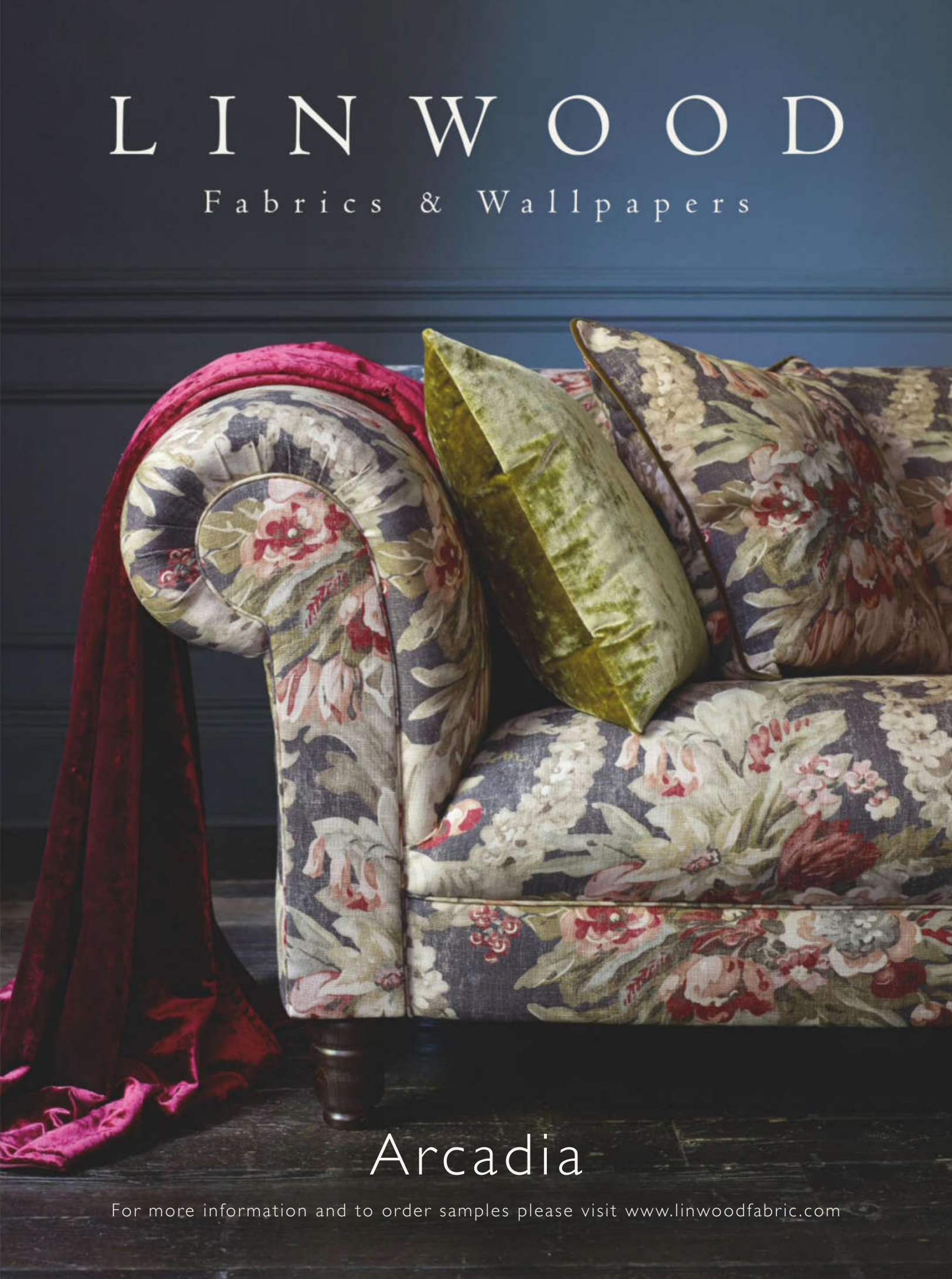
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